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THE

SCIENCE OF THE SAINTS

IN PRACTICE.

BY

THE VERY REV. FATHER J. P. PAGANI.

VOL. I

JANUARY, FEBRUARY, AND MARCH.

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TO

HIS ESTEEMED AND MUCH-LOVED FRIEND AND

BROTHER IN CHRIST,

THE REV. HENRY EDWARD MANNING,

The following Pages

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PREFACE.

THE idea of the present work suggested itself to the Author's mind, whilst he was reading the New Testament and the Lives of the Saints for his own spiritual edification, during his convalescence after a grievous and dangerous illness.

Whilst occupied in this pious exercise, he felt very forcibly, that the sacred maxims contained in holy writ, and the bright examples of virtue recorded in the Lives of the Saints, are at once calculated to please, instruct, and edify all such Christians as sincerely desire to live up to the spirit of their holy calling; and revolving this thought in his mind, he was led by degrees to conceive the design of compiling the present work.

The prayer with which the author commits these pages to the press is, that they may serve the end for which the work is designed. May

the Father of Light, by His holy grace, enable us, dear reader, to understand and relish ever more and more the Science of the Saints, and to tread in their footsteps along the path of holiness.

St. Mary's College, Rugby.

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THE

SCIENCE OF THE SAINTS.

JANUARY.

UNION AND FRATERNAL CHARITY.

"Be careful to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."—*Ephes.* iv.

FIRST DAY.

"Holy Father, keep them in Thy name, whom Thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we also are, and not for them only do I pray; but for those also who through their word shall believe in me. That they all may be one, as Thou, Father, in me, and I in Thee: that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me. And the glory which Thou hast given me, I have given to them: that they may be one as we also are one. I in them and Thou in me: that they may be made perfect in one: and the world may know that Thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as Thou hast also loved me."(a)—*Words of our Blessed Saviour.*

THE object of the incarnation, passion and death of our blessed Redeemer was, "to gather together in one the children of God that were dispersed;" uniting them so closely, by the sacred bond of charity, that they should form but one family under the same head, and animated by the same spirit. To accomplish this great object, after preaching

(a) John xvii.

the Gospel of the kingdom during His life, and after choosing twelve apostles, who were to disseminate the happy tidings through the whole world, in the last prayer which He made to His divine Father on the eve of His death, He begs of Him, in an especial manner, so to keep His present and future disciples in His name that they might be one, as They also are one. Omnipotence Itself could not use a language stronger than this, to prove to His disciples the absolute necessity of cultivating and promoting, amongst themselves, the most perfect union and charity; for what greater union can we imagine, or could He exhibit to us, than that which exists between Him and His heavenly Father, Who, although two distinct persons, have but the same identical nature and will? This prayer of Jesus, whereby he begged the divine Father to keep His disciples in perfect union and peace, was heard by the Father, who is well pleased in His dearly beloved Son, for soon after the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the apostles at the first establishment of Christianity that great spectacle was seen, wonderful to the angels of God no less than to men, by which persons of all kinds were united together by such heavenly ties as to astonish the pagans themselves, who could not understand how men of different habits, education, and country, could love each other as brethren, renouncing all self-love, and only contending which should do most good to the other; forgetful of their own interests, and freely offering their lives for the love of their neighbour. How tender and affecting is the description which the Evangelist St. Luke gives of the first Christians of Antioch in the Acts of the Apostles. He assures us that they were so united in affection that

they seemed to have but one heart and one soul. They were so closely joined together by the bond of charity, as to be induced to give, with perfect willingness, all their substance for the common good, and in behalf of their brethren. The rich sold their possessions, and distributed the price amongst the poor according to the wants of each. All repaired each day to the temple that they might give themselves to fervent and united prayer. The faithful increased, and assembled in different houses to celebrate the sacred mystery of the Eucharist, which was followed by a feast of charity. The praises of God and holy joy, pure and simple love, were the seasoning of this supper. The people who beheld their pure and holy lives were edified, and became attached to them; in this way the Almighty added to the holy society His new disciples.

The spirit of union and charity which flourished amongst the first Christians, at Antioch, was especially perpetuated in the Christian Church, by the instrumentality of Religious Institutions, which, like a resplendent apparel, have always adorned the immaculate Spouse of Christ.

It is related in the life of St. Antony, that the monks who lived in the desert under his direction were so closely united together by the ties of concord and charity, that the wilderness seemed changed into an image of Paradise, and its inhabitants resembled the citizens of heaven. They watched and prayed without ceasing; they meditated frequently on the word of God; they sang his praises day and night; they kept, in a manner, a continual fast; they laboured with their hands for their own support, and to have wherewithal to supply the necessities of their indigent neigh-

bours: in fine, they all lived in a holy union and perfect charity, without murmurs or detractions, and felt no other ambition or strife, but who should excel his neighbour in all kinds of Christian virtues; so that to behold this multitude of holy solitaries, separated from the children of the world, in those vast deserts, and leading there such angelical lives, was enough to make any one cry out, "How beautiful are thy pavilions, O Jacob, and thy tents, O Israel! As valleys overshadowed with woods, as well-watered gardens near the rivers; as tabernacles which the Lord hath pitched."

There is a beautiful picture drawn by St. John Chrysostom of some religious of his time who lived in great union and charity. "In their abode," says he, "there breathes the odour of charity; peace of mind, rejoicing in spirit, security of conscience, serenity of countenance, union of will, tenderness of affection, blessedness of heart, and converse with God. If they die, O my God, how glorious is their end! It is attended with hymns, and called a solemn triumph, not a mournful event. When the death of one of their brethren is announced to the community, the general feeling is rejoicing for him who is at rest, who has finished his pilgrimage, and now triumphs in glory with Christ," and ecclesiastical history is full of facts of this description in every age.

One of the early fathers of the Society of Jesus thus speaks of the union and charity which reigned in the houses of the society in its beginning. "Nothing consoles me more than to see amidst such a variety of dispositions, such uniformity of will, such complete equality, among so great difference of ranks such harmonious

feelings and friendly concurrence among so many of divers tongues and nations. You cannot here discover who is in authority, and who is learned, or who amongst us, while living in the world, was rich or noble, poor or base. If any were to say this man is my friend, or I am beloved by such an one, this worldly language would be regarded as strange, and be heard with astonshment, for when all love each other as themselves, all are friends. When some depart in obedience to various parts of the world, what affectionate farewells; what loving embraces, and joyous welcome in receiving back those who return! Every house of the society to which we come is our own house, and its inhabitants are so many brothers. Let us, with gratitude, acknowledge God's grace in these things."

Luigi Strada, a holy monk of the order of St. Bernard, writes as follows:—"Certainly, what I have witnessed in some places in his holy company is very wonderful, and appears like divine enchantment; men not of different lineage only, but of diverse nations and languages: young students and aged teachers become in a short time so conformed in mind and so united by mutual charity, that they have in truth one heart and one mind; so that any one who did not know who they were, would say that they were children of the same parents, or at least persons of similar dispositions."

SECOND DAY.

"If two of you shall consent upon earth concerning anything whatsoever they shall ask, it shall be done to them by my Father who is in heaven. For where there are two or three gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them."(a)—*Our Blessed Saviour.*

By these words, which are those of eternal wisdom and truth, we are assured that there is nothing which is so much calculated to draw down upon us and upon our undertakings the protection of God and His celestial benedictions, as the spirit of Christian union.

The common doctrine of the saints is, that one of the chief marks by which to know that God especially loves any congregation, and cherishes it with an affection approaching to that which He bears His divine Son; is when He pours down upon them the grace of fraternal union; as He did in the primitive Church, upon the Christians that enjoyed the first fruits and first blessings of the Holy Ghost.

It is for this reason that the Apostles, who were appointed by the Son of God to found and propagate His Church through the whole world, in the inspired lessons which they addressed to the first Christians, and which were transmitted to us for our instruction and edification, continually and urgently remind us of the strict duty of cherishing and promoting amongst ourselves union and fraternal Charity.

(a) Matt. xviii.

The great Apostle St. Paul, writing to the Corinthians, thus addresses them:—"I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no schisms amongst you; but that you be perfect in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it has been signified unto me, brethren, by them that are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions amongst you.[a] . . . . I fear lest when I come I shall not find you such as I would, and that I should be found by you such as you would not; lest perhaps contentions, envyings, animosities, dissensions, detractions, whisperings, swellings, seditions be among you![b] I write these things being absent, that being present I may not deal more severely according to the power which the Lord hath given me unto edification and not unto destruction. For the rest, brethren, rejoice, be perfect, take exhortation, be of one mind, have peace, and the God of peace and of love shall be with you."[c] Writing to the Ephesians he earnestly recommends to them the same thing—"I, therefore, a prisoner in the Lord," he tells them, "beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation in which you are called, with all humility and mildness, with patience supporting one another in charity. Careful to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. One body and one spirit, as you are called in one hope of your calling. One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is above all, and through all, and in us all."[d]

(a) 1 Cor. i.
(b) 2 Cor. xii.
(c) 2 Cor. xiii.
(d) Ephes. iv.

Writing to the Philippians he strongly urges the same point,—"If there be any consolation in Christ," says he, "if any comfort of charity, if any society of the spirit, if any bowels of commisseration, fulfil ye my joy, that you be of one mind, having the same charity, being of one accord, agreeing in sentiment. Let nothing be done through contention, neither by vain glory; but in humility let each esteem others better than themselves. Each one not considering the things that are his own, but those that are other men's. For let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."(a)

Lastly, writing to the Romans, he tells them as follows,—"Rejoice with them that rejoice; weep with them that weep. Being of one mind one towards another: not minding high things, but consenting to the humble. Be not wise in your own conceits.....If it be possible, as much as is in you, have peace with all men."(b)

Nor did the apostles confine themselves merely to teaching the faithful the necessity of union and charity, they set also before them luminous examples of these virtues. Thus when there arose a murmuring of the Greeks against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration, the apostles calling together the multitude of the disciples exhorted them to choose seven men full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom they ordained deacons and appointed over the daily ministration, and took away all cause of disunion. On another occasion when the question arose amongst some of the faithful respecting the necessity of circumcision, and of

(a) Philip. ii. (b) Rom. xii.

observing the Mosaical law, the apostles and the ancients assembled to consider this matter, and after a long discussion put an end to the contest and established union and peace amongst the faithful, by the following decree. "It hath seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us to lay no further burden upon you than these necessary things," &c. This care of the apostles was followed up by the pastors of the Church in succeeding ages, who have had nothing more continually at heart than to promote the spirit of union and peace amongst the flock intrusted to their charge and to re-establish it where it has been destroyed.

THIRD DAY.

"If any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor hath the Church of God. God is not the God of dissension, but of peace." (a)—*The Apostle St. Paul.*

It is often well remarked by the saints, that all the works of God are stamped with the heavenly mark of union. If we ascend up into heaven and contemplate the adorable Trinity, we behold the most perfect possible union existing between the three divine persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost,—of three persons there is but one God. If, again, we view the heavenly spirits, the nine choirs of angels,

(a) 1 Cor. xi. and xiv.

and all the blessed inmates of the heavenly Jerusalem, we behold the most admirable concord and peace reigning amongst them; all have but one will, one object, one desire, to bless and praise their Maker. Though forming different hierarchies, and varying in degrees of glory and happiness, as star differs from star in brilliancy, yet all are united together in the most perfect love. If from the contemplation of the heavenly Jerusalem we descend into the earthly paradise, and behold our first parents Adam and Eve such as they came from the hand of their Creator pure and spotless, in the state of original justice, we see in them also the same spirit of union. We see man composed of a body and soul, united together in the most perfect manner; the inferior powers and faculties, subordinate to the superior, and in perfect harmony with reason; and the superior faculties obedient to God and perfectly submissive to the divine will. If from the terrestrial paradise of old, we turn our consideration to the new one of the Holy Church which our blessed Saviour has planted upon earth by the effusion of His most sacred Blood, we see that in it likewise a perfect unity subsists, and that all its energies are directed to unity; for the great mission which the Church received from her divine spouse, has for its object to assemble all men into one fold, under one shepherd, to infuse into them the same divine spirit, and to link them together as closely as possible by the bands of the same divine charity.

The office of bringing mankind to a perfect union, which the Church has received from her divine Spouse, she has fulfilled until now, and will ever continue to fulfil until the end, namely, until her divine Spouse shall have brought to nought

all principality, and power, and virtue, until He shall have put all His enemies under His feet, until He shall have gathered together, in one, all the children of God that were dispersed, until He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God and the Father, until all the elect shall have assembled together in the heavenly Jerusalem to reign in union and peace for ever and ever. "When all things shall be subdued unto Him," says the Apostle St. Paul, "Then the Son, also Himself, shall be subject unto Him that put all things under Him that God may be all in all."

And as the works of God are all stamped with the heavenly mark of union, so on the contrary the works of the devil all breathe a spirit of discord and disunion. No sooner did he effect an entrance into the heart of man than he destroyed that blessed harmony which formerly existed amongst the various powers and faculties of the human soul, and raised in its place a multitude of unruly and conflicting passions. This spirit of discord and disunion did not keep itself concealed within the heart of man, but by the agency of the same power of darkness, soon manifested itself externally, and propagated everywhere its malignant and deadly influence. Hence we see the very first person who appeared upon this earth, born of sinful man, agitated by the evil spirit of discord, and burning with envy and rage, rising like a tiger against his innocent brother, and by an act, the most unnatural and cruel, imbruing his guilty hand in his spotless blood. What Cain did against his brother was but a miserable and awful prelude of what afterwards happened in the world at large, for in proportion, as mankind multiplied upon earth, men instead of looking upon each other as

brethren, and keeping themselves united together by the sacred bond of charity, blinded and seduced by the prince of darkness, abandoned themselves to hatred and discord. This evil went so far that man rose against his fellow, family against family, kingdom against kingdom, nation against nation, as if men had been born not to love to help, and to aid, but rather to oppose, to hate, to destroy each other.

Such was the state of the world, with very little exception, from its creation to the coming of Christ. When the incarnate Son of God appeared upon earth, the Heavenly Hosts indeed proclaimed a new era of union and peace amongst the children of men. "Glory to God in the highest, and peace to men of good-will." Nevertheless the spirit of evil did not desist from his dark work, but doubled his efforts in order to counteract the heavenly work of the Son of God. Nor did he labour in vain, for scarcely a single century has elapsed, or can any single place be found, where he has not somewhat succeeded to disseminate awful schisms, and to spread the spirit of disunion amongst the children of God. Such has been the work of the infernal powers until now, and such will it continue to be until the end of time,—until they shall entirely be crushed under the power of Him who is destined to gain a full and complete victory over death and hell.

This truth, that all the works of God bear the divine mark of union, and those of the devil are all stamped with the infamous character of discord and disunion, is beautifully declared by the Apostle St. James, in the following words:—"If there be contentions in your hearts, glory not, and be not liars against the truth. For this is not

wisdom, descending from above; but earthly, sensual, devilish; for where envy and contention is, there is inconstancy and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above, first indeed is chaste, then peaceable, modest, easy to be persuaded, consenting to the good, full of mercy and good fruits, without judging, without dissimulation. And the fruit of justice is sown in peace, to them that make peace."(a)

FOURTH DAY.

"Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."(b)—*Holy David.*

St. Austin, speaking of these words of the royal prophet, says that their sweet sound, their harmonious melody, has given birth to monasteries. It is by the accents of so charming a voice, that many awakened from drowsiness and tepidity, have left both friends and riches, to live together in the union and charity of a religious life; and it is at the sound of this trumpet that coming from divers parts of the world, they assembled together and enjoyed in the possession of mutual charity a foretaste of a heavenly life. In fine, it is this which has peopled so many religious houses, established so many different orders, and attracted so many hearts to Jesus Christ. Hence, the Wise Man speaking of three things very precious, both in the sight of God and man, puts concord amongst brethren,(c) in the first place.

(a) James iii., 14, to the end.
(b) Psalm cxxxii. (c) Ecclus. xxv.

St. Jerome, commenting on the same passage, says, that it is addressed peculiarly to religious assembled together in the same community, and "in truth," says he, "it is a very great good, and a very great comfort, that for one brother we have left in the world, we find an infinity of brethren in religion, who love us better than our carnal brothers could do." The great St. Ambrose also teaches us, that brotherhood in Jesus Christ is far more excellent than that of flesh and blood; because the one may perhaps produce some likeness of body, but the other produces a much greater likeness, namely, the union of the heart and soul. The angelic doctor, St. Thomas, says that the beauty of anything consists in the perfect harmony and symmetry existing amongst its different parts. This truth we see in every thing around us. Thus it is with a piano-forte. The melody of this instrument consists in a perfect harmony of the various chords or strings of which it is composed. Each note by its union with the others contributes to form those enthrilling passages which so much enchant the ear. The same also is to be said of a picture: its beauty consists in the due subordination and agreement of the various parts when united together. If all the parts of the human body were depicted in the most exquisite and perfect manner on canvass separately, but, when united, they did not agree with one another; if one was larger than the other, one arm longer than the other, the beauty of the picture as a whole would be destroyed. The like is to be said in general of the visible creation; its beauty consists in the perfect union and agreement of its various parts, which all concur and form a most beautiful whole.

The same principle is also applicable to every religious society, its beauty consists principally in the perfect union and concord to be found amongst its different members, for what can be more beautiful or lovely than to see superiors and inferiors united together in perfect union, having but one heart and soul?

St. Basil, reflecting on the strict union which exists between religious persons, says: "What can we figure to ourselves more pleasing, happy, and admirable than to see men of divers nations so strictly united by the exact resemblance of manners and discipline, that they seem to have but one mind in divers bodies, and in like manner to see many different bodies become the instruments of one mind only? And St. Lawrence Justinian affirms, that nothing in this world represents so well that admirable assembly of the heavenly Jerusalem as a society of religious, who are perfectly united together by charity. The life they lead is truly heavenly and angelical. Our Lord is truly amongst them: the place they live in is no other than the house of God, and the gate of heaven."

Oh, what a paradise is a community where union and mutual charity reign! The Lord looks with complacency on those persons who dwell together in unity, who are animated by the same spirit, and who seek only to assist each other in the practice of virtue, that they may be all united one day in the enjoyment of eternal glory! It is the spirit of union and charity, says St. Jerome, that makes true religious, and assembles them under one and the same discipline and government—without this, monasteries are a hell, and those that are in them devils; but with this,

monasteries become a paradise upon earth, and their inhabitants angels incarnate. In fact, what greater hell can we imagine than to be continually together, and always to have different wills, and judgments opposite to one another? And on the contrary, what is it to live in union of will, but to live the life of angels here below, and to begin to taste in this world the peace and tranquillity they enjoy in heaven?

St. John Climacus relates that, in the vicinity of Alexandria, there was a celebrated monastery, where, because they loved each other cordially in holy charity, all the religious enjoyed the peace of paradise. In general, the first who perceived a disagreement between two of the religious was able to restore peace by a mere sign. But if they could not be reconciled, both were sent as exiles to a neighbouring house, and were told at their departure, that the abode of two demons in the monastery could be no longer profitable to the community.

FIFTH DAY.

"Every kingdom divided against itself shall be made desolate, and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand."(a)—*Our blessed Saviour.*

THESE words of our divine Redeemer contain a sublime lesson for all Christians, and especially for religious; for they teach us that no religious community can ever be formed or be able to subsist in a flourishing state without the spirit of union and fraternal charity. Take away this union or bond from any assembly whatsoever, and it will presently become a Babylon, and present nothing but discord and confusion. The common saying is, that where there is a multitude of people there is also confusion; but this ought only to be understood of a multitude that is not well united; for that which is perfectly united is a heavenly hierarchy upon earth.

St. Basil, desirous to encourage us to union and fraternal charity, exhorts us to consider what that union of the Machabees was when they fought for the Lord. "Consider," continues he, "what was that of the Israelites also, who having levied an army of more than three hundred thousand men, 'marched,' says the Scripture, 'as if all of them had been but one man.'"(b) That is, they marched all with the same resolution and courage; and hence it came to pass, that they struck fear into their enemies, and gained most signal victories over them. We ought to fight after the same manner in the spiritual warfare we sustain for our Lord, and by this means we shall advance in

(a) Matthew xii. 25. (b) 1 Kings xi. 7.

perfection, and fill our enemies with terror. The devil himself will tremble, and will not dare to attack us; and as long as he sees so many persons strictly united against him he will lose courage, and despair of doing us any harm.

St. Ignatius, speaking of the chief reason for which he thought it necessary that the members of his society should live in perfect union, says, in one place, that they ought to take very great care to preserve a strict union amongst themselves, without permitting it to be wounded or hurt in anything; that being thus united by the bond of fraternal charity, they may employ themselves more efficaciously in the service of God and of their neighbour. He says, in another place, that without this union, the society cannot long subsist, nor attain the end for which it was instituted. If the soldiers destined to fight the enemy turn their arms against one another, it is not to be doubted but that instead of overcoming them, they will infallibly destroy themselves. "Their hearts are divided," says Osee, "and they will presently perish."(a) And the apostle, writing to the Galatians, says, "If you bite or devour one another, take care that you come not to be destroyed amongst yourselves."(b) Behold what is to be feared in religion. For as to other things we have nothing to fear from without; and the persecutions and tempests which the world can excite, will never be able to hurt us, so long as charity and peace shall be established amongst us.

St. Bernard, speaking to his religious on this subject, says, "What can there be from without that can distress and trouble you, if you be in a

(a) Osee x. 2. (b) Gal. v. 15.

good state within, and if you enjoy fraternal peace? And who can do you any harm, if you are animated with a true zeal and a holy emulation? As long as we are what we ought to be, and live in a perfect union one with another, all contradictions from without are so far from doing us any hurt, that, on the contrary, they will contribute to our good and advancement. Thus when the Church was persecuted in the first ages, it received no more damage than the vine does when it is pruned, because for one branch which was cut off there sprouted out many; and as a holy martyr said heretofore very well to the tyrant, whilst he caused him to be torn in pieces by the executioners, that in shedding the blood of Christians, he only watered the earth to make it produce greater abundance of fruit.

In the first book of the Machabees, the holy Scripture praises the Romans very much for living in great union amongst themselves. "They commit," says the holy Scripture, "every year the supreme authority to one man, whom all obey, and there is no envy nor jealousy amongst them."(a) So that being united in this manner, they overcame all their enemies, and became masters of the world; but when they began to be embroiled in civil wars they destroyed themselves, which gave rise to that saying, "That little things are augmented by concord, and the greatest ruined and destroyed by discord."

"Where," says St. Augustine, "you see the stones of any fabric bound to the timber, you enter with security, and apprehend no danger."(b) But where the stone is detached from the wood,

(a) 1 Mac. viii. 16. (b) Serm. 256, de Temp.

you should shudder at the very thought of approaching the building. Happy the religious house in which all are united by holy charity; but miserable is the monastery in which disunion and party spirit prevail. "Yes," adds the saint, "such a monastery is not the tabernacle of the Lord, but the abode of Lucifer; it is a house not of salvation but of perdition." Of what use are riches and magnificence, a splendid church and beautiful cloister, to a monastery from which union and charity are banished? Such a monastery is a hell, where, to prevent the advancement of their rivals, each party decries the other. Suspicions and aversions are always on the increase; they fill the heart and occupy the mind of the religious at mental prayer, at mass, and at communion. Hence they may exclaim, "O miserable prayers, miserable masses, miserable communions!" In a word, where there is not union there is no recollection, no peace, no God. If factions exist in your house, dear brother, prostrate yourself before the Lord, and in His presence pour tears of blood and fervent supplications, that by His Almighty hand He may remedy the evil. For when the spirit of faction has crept into religion, it can be extinguished only by the arm of Omnipotence. If it be in your power to restore peace, endeavour with all your might to accomplish so great a good; but if the extinction of discord be beyond your reach, it is your duty at least to pray to God, and to shun, as you would death itself, every action which may encourage the wicked spirit of faction.

SIXTH DAY.

"Thou must renounce thy will in many things, if thou wilt keep peace and concord with others. It is not a small matter to live in a Monastery, or in a Congregation, and to converse there without reproof, and to persevere faithful till death. Blessed is he who has there lived well and made a happy end."—*Thomas à Kempis.*

NOTHING is more contrary to charity and union than self-love, and that attachment we naturally have to ourselves, and to our own will. Wherefore St. Ignatius calls self-love the mortal enemy of all kind of order and union; and the learned Humbertus calls it the plague of a religious life, and the bane of all communities. It also infects and ruins all things—and though it is true that it is the common enemy of all virtues in general, yet it is no less true that it is a particular enemy of charity. The very name of self-love gives us to understand this; the word *self* imports a formal exclusion of all kind of communication, and consequently self-love is the entire opposite to charity; which seeks nothing more than to communicate itself. Self-love wraps itself up totally within itself, and introduces division everywhere else, it thinks of nothing but itself, and endeavours always to turn all things to its own particular interest—all which is directly contrary to union and charity.

In order to live in union with others, it is absolutely necessary that we deny ourselves in many things, because the spirit of Christian union is such an inestimable blessing, which can neither be obtained nor preserved except by the sacrifice of self-will.

When some of the bishops wished to have St.

Gregory Nazianzen for Patriarch, whilst others refused to submit to his authority, the Saint, to heal their dissensions, exclaimed, "My brothers, I wish to see you in peace, and if the renunciation of my Patriarchal dignity be necessary to preserve harmony amongst you, I am ready to renounce my see." He then gave up the Bishopric of Constantinople and retired into solitude.

But still more remarkable is the fact, which we read in the lives of the Fathers of the Desert. There happened to be a dispute between two neighbouring bishops, upon affairs relating to their respective dioceses, which was likely to turn out very much to the prejudice of the weaker of the two, because his antagonist was a man who had great power. Wherefore, being sensible of his danger, he assembled one day all his clergy, and told them he had found out an expedient, by means of which, through the grace of Christ, he made no doubt but they should gain their cause, and overcome their adversary. They could not comprehend how this could possibly be, considering the power of the man with whom they had to contend. "Well," said he, "stop a little and you shall see the goodness of God. On such a day they celebrate the festival of the holy martyrs with great solemnity in that diocese, therefore you shall accompany me thither, and provided you imitate me in whatever I shall then do, we shall certainly carry our cause." Having assured him that they would: on the day appointed, they all followed him to the neighbouring city, although ignorant of the means whereby he intended to overcome his adversary. At their arrival they found the whole people assembled, with their bishop and his clergy; when, without a moment's hesita-

tion, the humble prelate advanced, his clergy all following him, and, together with them, prostrated himself at the feet of the other bishop, saying, *Forgive us, my good Lord, we are all of us your servants.* The other was struck with astonishment at such profound humility, and at the same time touched with compunction; and God changing his heart, he also fell down upon his face, and taking hold of the feet of his fellow bishop, cried out, *It is you that are both my lord and father;* and from that moment their dispute was happily terminated, and they ever after lived in perfect concord and mutual charity. Thus the good prelate, by his humility, gained both his cause and the heart of his adversary, and told his clergy upon the occasion, that this was the true way to overcome their enemies.

SEVENTH DAY.

"Every one is desirous of acting according to his own liking; and is more inclined to such as are of his own mind. But if God be amongst us, we must sometimes give up our own opinion for the sake of peace. Who is so wise as to be able fully to know all things? Therefore, trust not too much to thy own thoughts; but be willing also to hear the sentiments of others. Although thy opinion be good, yet, if for God's sake, thou leavest it to follow that of another, it will be more profitable to thee."—*Thomas à Kempis.*

"Beware, lest thou nourish a fondness for thine own opinions, for if thou so doest, without doubt, thou wilt become as one intoxicated, for there is no difference between a drunken man and him who is full of his own judgment; since the one is as little guided by reason as the other. Every one has his own opinion, nor is there in this anything contrary to virtue. It is only the love and fond attachment to our opinions, and the esteem we feel for them, that are infinitely opposed to our progress towards perfection. And this attachment is one of the last things we are disposed to sacrifice, and is the very reason there are so few perfect."—*St. Francis of Sales.*

As we must deny our own will in many things, if we wish to preserve union and fraternal charity, so we must also mortify our understanding if we wish to attain the same end. We are not forbidden, as St. Francis of Sales says, to hold our own opinion, but we must beware of obstinately adhering to it to the prejudice of union and charity. The saints have always evinced great moderation on this point. Notwithstanding the great wisdom which they possessed, they used to distrust their own judgment, and felt great pleasure in following the opinion of others, whenever, by so doing, they were able to promote charity without offending against truth. In imitation of the saints let us love justice above all things, and we shall not find it difficult to sacrifice our own views whenever either charity or truth requires it.

St. Bonaventure affirms, that there is nothing

more unworthy or unbecoming God's servants, than to be at variance and to contend one with another about trifles. And St. John Climachus moreover assures us, that obstinacy, though it be in a matter of truth, can come from none but the devil. The reason is, because that which usually moves a man to maintain his own opinion with any heat is the desire he has of being esteemed. Hence it happens, that to appear more able or learned than his adversary, he endeavours to convince him that he is in error; and if he cannot be victorious in his dispute, he endeavours, at least, to make it appear he had not the worst of it; and thus it is always the devil of pride who is the occasion of this obstinacy. As regards the opinion of others, we must always have a tendency to think favourably of it until we discover it to be false. This charity itself requires, because we should not judge another to be wrong unless we have just and solid reasons for it, and so we should ever be disposed to think more favourably of his opinion than of our own. Sometimes it may happen that we must examine the matter, in order to find out whether another's opinion be right or wrong; but in this case we must ever remember to follow strict justice, not giving way to passion or prejudice; but examining every side favourable to our brother's opinion, and not, as too many do, considering only what favours our own views. As real lovers of truth, we must act with impartial justice, weighing all things that may favour our brother, forgetting, as it were, ourselves. And if, after thus examining and weighing all things, we find our brother's opinion to be more in accordance with truth than our own, we must unhesitatingly acknowledge it with joy, either in part

or wholly, as it may be; for sometimes it may happen that his opinion is true in one part and false in another; and so, as far as possible, we must joyfully acknowledge the truth so far as it goes; and that first, for the sake of *humility*, since this is a beautiful opportunity of humbling ourselves and gratifying self-denial; secondly, for the sake of *charity*, because whatever tends to favour another's opinion, serves also to promote charity amongst the brethren and to unite them more closely together; and *lastly*, for the sake of *truth*, rejoicing that we have found the truth.

The saints considered the mortification of the understanding as a thing so important for the preservation of union and charity, that besides practising it themselves, they also enforced it with great firmness upon those who put themselves under their direction.

It is related of St. Antony, that although he was a great master in spiritual things, yet he was never ashamed to seek instruction, not only from priests that came to visit him, but even from his own disciples, and whatsoever he heard good from any one, he humbly and thankfully acknowledged himself assisted thereby.

St. Francis of Paul, though he had received from God the gift of prophecy, yet always in doubtful cases, even in matters of the most trifling importance, used to consult with his inferiors. It is related of St. Philip that he used a particular care to exercise his penitents in the mortification of *human reasoning*. He was used to say that the sanctity of man lies in the breadth of three fingers, (the forehead), that is to say, in mortifying the understanding, which would fain reason upon everything.

EIGHTH DAY.

" In order to avoid contention, never contradict any one, except in case of sin or some danger to a neighbour; and when necessary to contradict others, and to oppose your opinion to theirs, do it with so much mildness and tact, as not to appear to do violence to their mind, for nothing is ever gained by taking up things with excessive warmth and hastiness."—*St. Louis, king.*

St. Paul, writing to Timothy, warns him to avoid disputing or contending with any body, it being a thing very contrary to union and fraternal charity. " Do not dispute or contend in words," says he, " for it serves for nothing else but to subvert and give scandal to the hearers;"(a) and a little after he adds, " A servant of God must not be contentious, but mild and sweet towards all men, and be patient and *apt to learn.*"(b) All the saints recommend the same thing to us, and St. Ignatius, in particular, has inserted this point in his rules. St. Dorotheus says, that he had rather things should be left undone, than perceive any disputes or contests arise amongst brethren in doing them; and adds, that should he repeat this sentiment a thousand times, he could not repeat it too often.

St. Gregory Nazianzen, who studied with Julian the Apostate, at Athens, relates of him that, even when a youth, he was remarkable for the spirit of contention and contradiction. To find one expressing any opinion was sufficient to make him oppose and contradict him. Seeing this bad spirit so deeply rooted in him, St. Gregory said, at that time, that the Roman State was nourishing a viper in its bosom, which would sooner or later ruin it.

(a) 2 Tim. ii. 14. (b) 2 Tim. ii. 24.

The saints, who are animated by the spirit of God, act in a very different manner. We read of St. Thomas of Aquin, that in his disputations, he always proposed his opinions with an unspeakable moderation, without any show of presumption, and without the least offence to any one; but behaved as a man who cared not for gaining the victory, but merely endeavoured to make known the truth.

It is related in the life of Father Segneri, that during a procession, in which the Litany of our Lady was being sung, he went up to one of the fathers, who was engaged as cantor, and said to him no more than this, "You are out of time." But to the servant of God this seemed such an excess, that the very same evening he went to the room of this religious, and casting himself at his feet, made the most humble apology for these innocent words.

Love each other in the Lord, said St. Ignatius to his brethren, and preserve union and mutual charity with all your strength. To this end let all abstain from obstinate disputes, and where there is a difference of opinion, bring forward your reasons humbly, from a desire to make known the truth and not from a desire to overcome. The holy father endeavoured, by every means in his power, to unite the minds of his subjects in the bonds of perfect charity. He desired that each should recognize in his brother an image of Jesus Christ, so that love for the object represented might overcome any feelings of aversion which his defects might give rise to. He directed that all should, as far as possible, avoid diversities of opinion, seeing that the wills of men are very often drawn into the disputes in which the intellect is

engaged. He forbade any one to reprove another, or to interfere with the duties of another, unless he was in authority or had received a special commission to do so. He required them to strip from their hearts all national predilections and love of country, so that they might bear a stronger affection to men of different nations. By these careful provisions of the holy father, an excellent spirit of union and fraternal charity was kept up among his children.

When it happens that we cannot possibly agree with another's opinion, and that we deem it a duty to contradict him, in this case the saints have taught us to do it without showing any asperity, but with mildness and grace. We should first abstain from all sharp words, such as are used by those who animadvert upon the neighbour's person, capacity, or any thing else belonging to him; for words of this kind are entirely contrary to charity. Sometimes we utter them in a refined and witty way, to recreate and please ourselves; and then they become more prejudicial than otherwise they would be; because the more wit and grace they are said with, the deeper impression they make, and the longer they live in the memories of those that hear them. Albertus Magnus says, "That as a stinking breath is a sign of a disordered stomach, so sharp words are a sign of a corrupted heart."

In the second place, we ought to speak with mildness and grace; for as St. Francis of Sales remarks, there are some truths which are most hard for man to hear, and which consequently must be made acceptable by the unction of charity. "A sweet word," says the wise man, "multiplies friends and appeases enemies:" and, on the con-

trary, "a harsh word raises up fury, and occasions quarrels and dissensions." For being all of us men, words of this sort hurt our feelings; and when the mind is once incensed, we look upon our brother not as we did before, but presently find something blameable in his conduct, and after, stop not at blaming him in our hearts only, but go further and speak ill of him. It is then of very great importance that our discourse be always seasoned with sweetness, that thereby we may gain the good will of our brethren, according to that saying of Scripture, "A prudent man renders himself amiable by his words."(a)

When two hard bodies hit one against the other, they make a great noise; but if a hard body strike against a soft one, it makes none at all. A cannon ball beats down a tower with a terrible crash; but if it be shot against a wool-sack its force is deadened and quickly spent. *A civil and meek word appeases wrath*, says Solomon, but a rude one provokes to fury. (b) The Holy Ghost also counsels us, *not to contend with a man of haughty words, this being to lay wood on the fire.*(c) We read in the life of St. Dositheus, that he spoke to every one with great sweetness and charity, and took great care to avoid all kinds of dispute with every one. But his office of infirmarian obliging him to have to do with a great many, occasioned sometimes some little disputes, as with the cook of the monastery, because he took not all the care he should in dressing the meat for the sick; or sometimes also with the dispenser, because he gave him not what was best

(a) Ecclus. xx. 13. (b) Prov. xv. 1.
(c) Ecclus. viii. 4.

for the sick, or made him wait too long for it, or because he carried into the refectory what he wanted for the infirmary ; whereupon it sometimes happened that he spoke louder than ordinary, or a little more sharply than became him. But when this happened he felt so confused that, retiring to his cell, he there prostrated himself and wept so bitterly that his superior, St. Dorotheus, was often forced to go to him to ask him what ailed him, and to urge him to tell him the cause of his trouble. *Father*, replied Dositheus, weeping anew, *I have spoken with contempt to my brethren* ; whereupon Dorotheus reprehended him severely for his fault, saying, *Fie, is this the humility you ought to have ? You have offended your brother, and yet you do not die for shame to have committed such a fault as this is?* And having thus chid him, he added, *Well now, take courage and get up, God has pardoned you, let us now endeavour to begin a new life.*

NINTH DAY.

"There are six things that our Lord hates, but his soul has a perfect detestation of the seventh, the sower of discord among brethren."(a)—*The Wise Man.*

When we would express the horror we have of anything, we say we detest such a thing from our hearts, and the Scripture in this accommodates itself to our manner of speaking, that we may the better understand how disagreeable those who cause and foment divisions are in the sight of God. But if they are detested by God, they are detested by man also. *The whisperer or tale-bearer*, says the Wise Man, *defiles his own soul, and shall be hated by all; and he who lives with him shall become odious to the whole world.*(b) *Wherefore*, says he, in another place, *be not styled a tale-bearer.*(c) That is, give no occasion to affix this name to you. And to speak truth, there is no quality so unworthy, not only of a religious, but of any man whomsoever. For what is more dangerous in a community than one of a seditious spirit, who is good for nothing else than to create dissensions among his brethren, and who thus charges himself with an employment that belongs to the devil, the father of discord and division?

There is nothing which St. Jane Frances more dreaded in a religious house than the spirit of discord amongst its members. Hence if she heard that any coolness existed between any of the sisters, she had no rest till she had effected their reconciliation, and exaggerated the sin of letting

(a) Prov. vi. 16, 19. (b) Eccl. xxxi. 31. (c) Ibid. v. 16.

charity wax cold. She quoted to them, and repeated several times, the above-mentioned words of Solomon, *Six things there are which the Lord hateth, and the seventh His soul detesteth; those who sow discord among brethren.* She once said, with great zeal, that if justice was done, those who sowed words of disunion ought to have their tongues cut off; adding, with great fervour, that she would wish her own tongue to be cut out, and that she would willingly suffer it, if by this means she could banish from all religious houses and the world, all sowers of discord and gossip-breeding disunion. There was no fault which she censured with greater severity than sins against the holy virtues of union and charity, nor for which she was so forward to impose penances. She often told the sisters that a great tenderness of conscience was required to preserve union and charity, and that if they sinned ever so little against this holy union, they should confess it minutely, and not generally; telling them that it was impossible for them to conceive how easy it is to offend our Lord when we speak of our neighbour, especially if we have the slightest shadow of jealousy in any case.

But if it be so vile and disgraceful to sow discord between brethren, what will it be to sow dissensions between superiors and subjects, and to cause a division between the head and the members, between a father and his children? May we not very justly say that this crime would be more abhorred by God than the other? Yet what little care do we take to preserve ourselves from being guilty of it? The people of Israel were exceedingly attached to David, and had oftentimes given him remarkable proofs of affection and obedience;

yet, on hearing his son Absalom speak ill of him—on hearing him blame his conduct and decry his government, they ended with rebelling against David. How often has it happened that a religious stood well with his superior, had a high opinion of him, interpreted all his actions in good part, laid open to him, with all candour, the hidden secrets of his heart; and yet all this was suddenly destroyed by a word some one has inconsiderably said, and, perhaps, without the least evil intention. Hence ensued suspicions, diffidences, dissimulations, rash judgments, detractions, and unkind offices; and sometimes it happens that the evil increases so much, that one secretly whispering and communicating the matter to another, the contagion spreads itself over the whole community; so that one cannot sufficiently describe how prejudicial these sorts of reports and stories may, and do often, prove to religious union and charity.

The sin of sowing discords amongst brethren is so detestable and abominable in the sight of God, that He has often inflicted the most awful punishments upon those who were guilty of it. When Mary and Aaron spoke against Moses, and, by their murmuring, gave cause to dissension and schism amongst the people, the Lord being angry with them, afflicted the former with a loathsome leprosy, and the latter escaped punishment by a humble confession of his sin. When the children of Israel rose into a faction against Moses, complaining that he had drawn them out of Egypt, and proposing to return thereto, the Lord, grievously offended at it, threatened to strike them with pestilence and consume them all, and it was only in consequence of the humble and fervent prayers of Moses that He changed the punishment to

their exclusion from the promised land; whilst the authors of the sedition were struck dead. Still more fearful is the punishment which God inflicted upon Core and his adherents, for having raised a sedition against Moses and Aaron. The Scripture relates,(a) that Core, Dathan, Abiron, and with them two hundred and fifty others of the children of Israel, leading men of the synagogue, rose and stood up against Moses and Aaron, and said, "Let it be enough for you that all the multitude consisteth of holy ones, and the Lord is among them: why lift you up yourselves above the people of the Lord?" At which, being grievously displeased, God ordered that the multitude should depart from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest they also should be involved in their sins: and this having been done, the earth broke asunder under their feet, and opening her mouth devoured them, with their tents and all their substance, and they went down alive into hell, the ground closing upon them, and they perished from among the people; and a fire coming out from the Lord destroyed the two hundred and fifty men that offered the incense.

(a) Numb. xvi.

TENTH DAY.

"Our enemy, the devil, who fights with us in order to vanquish us, seeks to disunite us in our houses, and to breed quarrels, contests, and rivalries, because, while we are fighting with each other, he comes and conquers us and makes us more securely his own. He who continues in anger, strife, and bitter spirit, has a taste of the air of hell."—*St. Philip.*

THERE is nothing more ruinous for a religious community or any other Christian society, than the spirit of disunion and faction amongst its members. Inward discord, says St. Ignatius, is the pestilence of religious institutions, destroying their inward spirit, and bringing all their riches to nothing. There is nothing which so villifies them in the world's opinion as to see them torn by factions.

Imagine you see a company of soldiers marching against the enemy. If the army be well united and marches in good order, it will surmount all obstacles and vanquish whatever opposes its power. And it is for this reason that the Holy Ghost, speaking of the Church, says, that it is *terrible as an army ranged in battle.*(a) It will not, therefore, be possible to break through this battalion, if it be always well united, if the soldiers observe exact discipline, and always firmly keep their ranks; because it is by this means, and after this manner, they defend one another. But if they are disunited, it will be presently broken, and entirely defeated. David having obtained a signal victory over the Philistines, *The Lord*, says he, *has divided my enemies before me, as waters are*

(a) Cant. vi. 3.

divided.(a) And the field of battle was called *the Place of Division.* This shows that to divide and to overcome is one and the self-same thing, and that the place of division is taken for the place of victory. Hence those who have written on warlike affairs, say, *That troops marching irregularly go rather to a butchery than to a battle;* and there is nothing more recommended in military discipline, than to keep the ranks well, and take care that the army be so united that all the soldiers mutually succour one another, remaining always firm at their post. This alone makes it invincible, and this secures not only the general good of the whole company, but the particular good of every soldier, whose success or misfortune is inseparably attached to the victory or defeat of the whole body. We may say the same of any religious society. If its members preserve the spirit of union, if they assist one another, if they march well united, and set upon their enemies in good order, they shall infallibly overcome, and be under no apprehension of defeat in any encounter. *The brother that is assisted by his brother is a strong city,*(b) says the Wise Man; and, *it is hard to break a triple cord.*(c) All the little threads, of which the string of a cross-bow is made, are very weak of themselves, if taken one by one; yet when they are united and interlaced one with another, they are able to bend a bow of steel. Even so will religious be strong, when they are united one with another by the bond of fraternal charity. But if, unhappily, they allow the spirit of discord and disunion to be introduced amongst them, they

(a) 2 Kings v. 20. (b) Prov. xviii. 19.
(c) Eccles. iv. 12.

may be sure that however they may exert themselves, they will not only be unable to do any great good to others, but will also injure themselves most grievously.

It is for this reason that the saints have always been so particular in recommending union to their brethren, and in punishing its violation with great severity. The first advice which St. Jane Frances was used to give to superiors who were going to found some new establishment was, that they were especially to strive after a great and holy union between their daughters. When she wrote to any community, or to the sisters of the noviciate of any house, she never omitted to recommend holy and mutual friendship, and consequently concord and love; she was often heard to say with deep feeling, and with tears in her eyes, that she should die if she saw disunion in a community of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin.

When the end of the triennium drew nigh, she read to the sisters in chapter the Treatise of Father Rodriguez on Religious Union, and commissioning a sister to mark the most beautiful passages, she said to her, "In these last acts of my superiorship, I wish to speak to our sisters of charity and love, because all things that are said to be a person's last are more deeply engraved on the heart; this mutual love and charity are the good things which I wish to this community."

We read of St. Liguori, that although he was full of meekness and charity, yet he singularly detested those who spread discord and caused disunion, and looked upon them as so many incarnate devils. If they did not amend after having been severely reprimanded, they were sooner or later expelled from the congregation.

When St. Thomas Villanova was appointed provincial, he enforced nothing as so important and necessary to the religious life as union and peace; and if by chance he found some restless, unquiet spirit in the convent troubling the brethren, he punished him most severely as a sower of scandal and disseminator of evil amongst the children of God.

St. Catherine of Bologna, in her last illness, whilst exhorting her sisters to the practice of religious virtues, recommended to them especially union and mutual charity. "These were," she said to them, "the last desires that Jesus Christ expressed to His Apostles at the hour before He left them, and which He told them to preserve with the greatest care. You ought then, my dear daughters, to bear each other's burdens, to forgive each other, and to support, with an inexhaustible patience, the sufferings which proceed from a difference of disposition. It is God's will, my dearest sisters and daughters, that I leave you; but be convinced that I shall be more useful to you after my death than I have been in life, provided you are always faithful in the discharge of your duties, and do not forget what I have so often recommended to you with regard to loving one another. I have often said, and I repeat it again, love and cherish peace and concord. Peace is the precious inheritance that Jesus Christ, when about to ascend to heaven, left not only to His Apostles but to all Christians, and consequently to you. Jesus Christ so loves this peace, and is so desirous that His disciples should retain it, that if you cherish it as you ought to do, you may be assured everything you undertake will prosper. Yes, He will certainly bless you, if you support

with patience the defects of your sisters, if you take pity on their weakness, and abhor everything that can sow dissension and discord among you."

The Venerable Margaret Alacoque used to look upon discord and disunion in religious houses, especially between subjects and superiors, as a most fatal plague. She relates that once whilst she was in an ecstasy our Lord said to her, "Listen well to these words from the lips of Truth. All religious separated from their superiors ought to regard themselves as vessels of reprobation, in which the best waters turn to corruption, the rays of the sun of grace producing on them the same effect as the natural sun produces upon muddy waters. These souls are rejected from my heart. The nearer they endeavour to approach to me by means of sacraments, prayers, and other exercises, the farther I remove myself from them, through the horror I feel towards them; they will go from one hell to another.

"Such disunion has already ruined numbers, and will ruin many more in the end, since every superior holds my place, whether he be good or bad. For this reason, when the inferior thinks only of resisting authority, he is covering himself with so many grievous wounds. It is in vain for him to knock at the door of my mercy; he will not be listened to unless I hear the voice of his superior."

ELEVENTH DAY.

"By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another."(a) "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."(b)—*Our Blessed Saviour.*

It is usual for princes and noblemen to give a particular ensign or livery to their household, that they may thereby be known by all, as persons attached to their family. Our Blessed Saviour, the King of kings and the Sovereign Ruler of all potentates, has also established a particular mark or ensign, by which His true disciples should be distinguished from the rest of men. On the eve of His passion, when the hour of His departure from His disciples was near at hand, with a heart burning with heavenly fire, He addressed to them a discourse full of divine wisdom, and recommended to them, as a characteristic sign of their fellowship, and a sure mark by which they would be recognised as His true disciples, the practice of sincere and mutual charity: "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another." The truth of this will be understood in what happened to St. Pacomius, when he was yet a pagan and served in the army of Constantine the Great. He embarked with some new levies, which were sent against Maxentius, and they arrived in very great distress at a town where the inhabitants gave them all sorts of provisions with so much cheerfulness, that Pacomius, astonished at it, asked who these persons were

(a) John xiii. 35. (b) John xv. 12.

that had such a wonderful inclination to help and assist others. They answered him, they were Christians, whose institution was to help and succour all the world, as much as they were able. Upon this he found himself interiorly touched with so ardent a desire of embracing Christianity that, lifting up his hands to heaven, and calling God to witness, he embraced it forthwith: thus the simple example of the fervent charity of these Christians was a sufficient motive to convert him, and make him believe that their religion was divine.

The following example, which is related in the lives of the Fathers of the Desert, is still more striking: it is related that St. Abraham, being consecrated bishop of a large country town inhabited by pagans, undertook with the greatest fervour the work of their conversion. He began his mission by pouring out prayers and tears before God, in behalf of those poor souls in whom he found no manner of disposition to profit by his words. Then burning with holy zeal, he went to the temple of the idols, where he overthrew their altars and broke their statues in pieces. Hereupon their rage knew no bounds, and falling upon him with merciless fury, after having laid innumerable blows and stripes upon him, they drove him out of the town.

The next morning, when they came to the church, (as they daily did, not out of devotion, but from a certain curiosity and pleasure they took in seeing its decorations), they were surprised beyond measure to find him at his prayers before the altar. But upon his beginning to preach to them, and to conjure them to turn from their idols to the living God, they again fell upon him, and

having beat him worse than before, they fastened a rope about his feet, and dragged him like a dead dog out of the town, where they pelted him with stones till they thought they had made an end of him. About midnight he, whom they had left for dead, came to himself, and after fervently praying, with abundance of tears, to the Father of Mercies, for the conversion and salvation of his persecutors, he got up and returned back into the town, and early in the morning was again found in the church singing psalms. The pagans, although astonished at seeing him, were no way mollified, but rather more enraged, so that they repeated the treatment they had given him the preceding day, and dragged him again with ropes out of their town. Nevertheless he returned the next day, and thus for the space of three whole years, he still persevered in his labours and fervent prayers for their conversion, under a perpetual succession of grievous sufferings, pains, and outrages, without ever showing the least anger or impatience, or returning them a single angry word, or even entertaining in his soul any hatred or aversion towards them whatever. On the contrary, the more cruelly they treated him, the more tenderly did he love them, and the more affectionately invite them to come to Christ, *the way, the truth, and the life.*

At length, after three years had passed in this manner, the patience and prayers of the saint prevailed over the resistance he had hitherto met from this obstinate people. Upon a certain occasion, when they were all assembled together, they began to declare to each other their great admiration of the unwearied patience and charity of the servant of God, and from thence to argue,

that the God whom he preached must needs be the true God, and the religion which taught him so much patience and charity, the true religion. These reflections, being matured by the grace of God, opened their eyes and softened their hearts, and produced a general resolution upon the spot, of all going in a body to the church, to yield themselves up to the man of God, and to embrace the faith he preached: which resolution they instantly put into execution.

St. Jane Frances was wont to say that she had found nothing in holy writ which had given her a greater subject for meditation than these words of Jesus Christ to his Apostles, "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." These words had sunk so deeply into her heart, that however badly she was treated by men, she always entertained for them the warmest and purest charity.

A gentleman was once exceedingly irritated because a young lady to whom he was paying his addresses, had entered a convent of the Visitation, and went so far as to present to the blessed mother a pasquinade upon herself. She began reading it without knowing what it was, then throwing it on the ground, said:—"Sir, I believe you have made a mistake, as this paper is not for us;" but he replied that it was meant for herself, and that he would explain it to her: on which he made use of the most insulting language that can be imagined. On leaving the parlour, she said to the sister who was present,—"Never, I assure you, did I hear anything which pleased me more than the words of this young man; but yet I compassionated him much, seeing him in a state of sin. We must do all we can that our Lord

may give us this soul." She prayed so fervently that our Lord granted her request: he was converted, begged pardon with tears, became a religious, a very virtuous priest, and a good director. Another, who had written against her to his sovereign, was obliged to have recourse to her, being in difficulties. She spoke to him as calmly as if he had been one of her greatest friends; forgot nothing in order to render him the service that he required, and would not even allude to what he had done against her and her convent. "Mother," said a sister to her, "you bear too much."—"Come, my daughter," was her reply, "see one beautiful sentence,—'Charity beareth all things; charity endureth all things.'"[a] Some persons, forgetful of their duty, reproached her with having done more harm than good in the institute; to which she replied with great mildness, that it might be true, but that it was against her will and knowledge. Again, a little while before she left a certain convent, she received a letter from a discontented nun, accusing her of many things of which she was perfectly innocent, which the sisters could not bear to read, but she begged them not to omit a word, to read every word distinctly, and for fear anything should have been omitted, she made them read it over again, listening with such recollection and devotion, that they were greatly edified to look at her. When they had finished its perusal, she said, "We must be as gentle as we can to gain this soul; there is not one in this institute for whom I would more willingly give my life."

(a) 1 Cor. xiii. 7.

TWELFTH DAY.

"This commandment we have from God, that he who loveth God, loveth also his brother."(a)

"All the law is fulfilled in one word: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."(b)—*The Apostle St. Paul.*

THE holy fathers teach, that the virtue of charity, which makes us love God for God, is the same that makes us love our neighbour for God. And they say, moreover, that as this love of God is a theological virtue, that is to say, a virtue wholly divine, which has God for its immediate object; so charity towards our neighbour is also a theological virtue, inasmuch as it is for God's sake, and to please God, that we love our neighbour.

The love of God and the love of our neighbour, as Father Rodriguez says, are like two rings joined together and put on the finger, one of which cannot be taken off without the other; both must be pulled off together. Inseparable in like manner are the love of God and the love of our neighbour. The one can never subsist without the other; so that it is but one love of pure charity which makes us love God, and our neighbour for God. We can, therefore, neither love God without loving our neighbour, nor love our neighbour with the love of pure charity, without loving God himself; because the motive we have to love our neighbour is God. Wherefore the apostle St. John, wishing to show us that we cannot love God without loving our neighbour, says:—"If we mutually love one another, God remains with us, and His charity is perfect within us."(c)

(a) 1 John iv. 21. (b) Rom. xiii. 9.
(c) 1 John iv. 12.

St. Jerome relates that St. John the Evangelist, when by reason of his old age, he was not able to reach the sacred assembly unless supported in the arms of his disciples, or to make long discourses, did nothing but repeat these words, "My sons, love one another.—Filioli diligite alteruterum." Being asked why he always gave the same lesson, "Because," replied the Apostle, "it is a precept of the Lord, and to observe it is sufficient.—Quia præceptum Domini est, et si solum fiat sufficit."

St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi, when mistress of novices, wished and recommended, that the novices should love each other in the Lord, as though they had been born of one father and mother, that there should be no distinction between them, but that they should regard one another as the daughters of the Eternal Father, the spouses of Jesus Christ, temples of the Holy Ghost, and sisters of the angels. If they met by accident, she wished them to rejoice, and mutually to salute each other with words which should excite to the love of God. When together in the noviciate, as in other places. they were to look upon themselves as in a choir of angels, represented by the virginity and purity of their sisters. Hardly a day passed in which she did not say to them, as St. John the Apostle to his disciples, "Daughters, love one another, for this is the commandment of Jesus," adding, "If you desire one degree of grace for yourselves, ask of God two or three for your sisters and companions, considering them as better disposed to receive it than yourselves. In this way you will be disposed to receive those graces, and purify your soul from all self-interest and self-esteem.

St. Jane Frances of Chantal was so deeply

impressed with this truth, that she never ceased to recommend it to her nuns. Before resigning her last superiorship, she spoke twice to the community on love of our neighbour, and was so excited that, passing through the sisters, she turned graciously to each of them individually, and said, bowing to them, "Love! love! love! my daughters; I know nothing else." A sister whom she had ordered to write a letter, said, "Mother, I will say in this letter that your charity is in its old age, and that like your godfather, St. John, you only speak to us of love;" whereon the blessed mother replied, "Do not, my daughter, make this comparison, for we must not profane the saints by comparing them to poor sinners; but you will indeed oblige me, if you repeat to these sisters what I told you about two years ago, that if I trusted my own courage, if I followed my own inclination, and if I did not fear to annoy my sisters, I would never speak of anything else but love; and I assure you," added she, with admirable innocence and love, "that I never open my mouth without desiring to say, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself.*"

She was very adroit in concealing and bearing with the faults of her neighbour, especially when they were directed against herself. Once, when a sister said to her, regarding some trial, "These are, indeed, choice morsels for the stomachs of the saints, as they have the heat of charity to digest them;" she replied, "I am not worthy, daughter, to have the food of the saints, but God permits me, for my humiliation, to feel these things; He sees my heart; I ask for no other defence. He well knows that I would sacrifice my life for the benefit

of any soul." At another time she said, "For three months have I been patiently endeavouring to gain access to this soul, and all my attentions are misinterpreted; I will not, however, desist, for I am still very far from having pardoned seventy times seven."

THIRTEENTH DAY.

"As the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of the body, whereas they are many, yet are one body; so also is Christ,—for in one spirit were we all baptized into one body,—and in one spirit we have all been made to drink."(a) "As in one body we have many members, but all the members have not the same office; so we being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members of one another."(b)—*The Apostle St. Paul.*

St. Basil and St. Augustine, in order to explain what kind of charity religious must bear to one another, make use of this beautiful comparison of St. Paul,—that amongst the various members of the body there exists the most perfect union, and that they mutually help and assist each other. On considering the various members which constitute the human body, we find, 1st. That each member is satisfied with its own fixed office, without envying the office or position of the others, and willingly performs its various functions and duties, and thus contributes to the good of the whole body. This is also what must be done by Christians, each one must rest content in the office and position in which he is placed,

(a) 1 Cor. xii. 12, 13. (b) Rom. xii. 4, 5.

without any thoughts of envy from the more noble employments of others. It is the spirit of the world to wish to supplant others, to deprive them of their offices, and to obtain for self the best situations. We must avoid such a spirit, and seek to be animated with the charity of Jesus Christ.

2ndly. In the human body the superior members do not despise the inferior members, but readily acknowledge their utility and make use of their services; and so St. Paul says, the hand cannot say to the eye, I want not your aid; nor the head to the feet, I need not your services, but all are useful for the good of the whole body, and oftentimes those parts which appear to be the most contemptible are most necessary. Thus also those who are placed in a high station must beware lest they contemn or despise those in lower offices; they must readily acknowledge the need they have of their services, and must remember that they often contribute more to the glory of God, and acquire more merit in His eyes than those engaged in higher employments. Men of the world, who enjoy high posts of honour and distinction, generally look down with contempt upon the poor and humble, and thus destroy charity, but we must not follow the maxims of the world, but those of Jesus Christ.

3rdly. The members of the human body have a mutual feeling for each other, so that one shares in the pleasure and pains of all the rest. This also should be the spirit reigning amongst the followers of Christ. They altogether form but one body, and so should each participate in the joys and sorrows of the rest; each one should rejoice with those who rejoice, and be sad with those that are afflicted; when this sorrow or rejoicing is according to

God. This our Saviour has shown us by His own example. Never did He see any one in trouble or distress without being moved to compassion, without entering into their sorrows. Thus, when He saw His beloved city Jerusalem hardening still more and more her heart to the calls of His grace, and drawing down upon her children the wrath of heaven, He wept with sorrow over her unhappy state. Again, when He stood over the grave of Lazarus, whom He loved, He wept, giving us an example to share in the sorrows and joys of our brethren, and look upon them as our own. Thus St. Paul acted, for he says, that he rejoiced with them that rejoiced, and wept with those who wept.

The reflection, that Christians are all members of but one and the same mystical body, under the same divine head, our Lord Jesus Christ, has always been a powerful stimulus to the hearts of the saints, and has urged them to exhibit those extraordinary examples of charity which are related in their lives.

St. Philip, being deeply impressed with this truth, contrived every means in order to benefit his neighbours to the utmost of his power. For this purpose he kept his room-door always open, so that he was exposed to every one who came; and when any one, through respect, would have retired, he took him by the hand and drew him in. He had neither time nor place which he could call his own. He wished every one to come in, even when he was unwell; and in the evening, although he might have gone to bed to rest himself, he gave audience to all who came, and would not have any one go away without consolation. He thus attached people to him in such a way that there

was nothing they would not willingly have done for him. He would, on no account, allow any one to say, "Philip is resting," or, "He does not wish to be disturbed." One day, Anthony Gallonio prevented a person from entering, as the hour seemed unseasonable; but when Philip heard of it, he rebuked him sharply, and said, "Have I not told you that I wish to have no time for my own?" Another time Francesco Tazzaro shut the saint's room, that he might not be worried: Philip perceiving that some one was waiting for him, called Francesco and gave him a most severe reprimand, in the presence of the person whom he had caused to wait. In fine, he was all things to all men. He suited himself to noble and ignoble, young and old, subjects and prelates, learned and ignorant, and received those who were strangers to him with singular benignity, and embraced them with as much love and charity as if he had been a long time expecting them.

A similar spirit of charity was displayed by the venerable Father Da Ponte, whose life may be considered as one continual act of service for the benefit of his neighbour. It is related that he ever made himself all to all, never at any time refusing himself to any one. On one occasion, the porter dismissed a gentleman who had asked for the holy man at an unseasonable hour: when he heard of it he sent for the porter, and said to him, "May God forgive you, brother! God forgive you! Why did you send away the gentleman? How do you know what his necessities may have been? And if the good of his soul has been in question, what remorse must you and I have for it? In charity never do such a thing again." His usual visits were to the prisons, hospitals, and

the sick in the towns, always with a view to the good of their souls, exhorting them to be reconciled to God, and to accept their sufferings with Christian resignation. His private study, his public sermons, catechisms, instructions, spiritual exercises, and even his familiar conversation, had no other object than to increase the knowledge of God, and to inflame every one with His holy love.

A gentleman, in a dying state, wishing to settle his accounts with God, and arrange his domestic affairs, under the direction and advice of the holy man, sent in all haste to request his assistance in a matter of great importance. The weather was excessively cold, and wet: Father Da Ponte was unusually ill, confined to his bed; but all this could not deter him: as soon as he had heard the sick man's wish he got out of bed, not without great difficulty, and would be carried to him: he spent more than two hours hearing his confession, giving him suitable advice, and so comforted him, that before his departure the gentleman was not only relieved in conscience, and happy about his family affairs, but was also very much improved in health. Although his maladies occasionally prevented him from either sitting or standing, he could not refuse himself to the numbers who continually asked to confess to him: he would rise from his bed, and, kneeling on the bare ground, supporting himself on the edge of the bedstead, hear confessions in this manner for several hours, almost every day, not only without showing either fatigue or weariness, but always with a cheerful countenance, thanking those who thus gave him an opportunity of doing some little thing for the service of God and the good of their souls.

FOURTEENTH DAY.

"To love one's neighbour as one's self is a greater thing than all holocausts and sacrifices."(a)—*The Evangelist St. Mark.*

THIS truth was so deeply felt by all the saints, that even those who have concealed themselves entirely from the world, and entered into the wilderness in order to attend exclusively to a contemplative life, not only took great interest in behalf of their neighbours, recommending them earnestly to God in their fervent prayers, but also, when necessary, have left their solitude and entered into populous cities in order to afford them some assistance in time of need. When the persecution raged exceedingly in Egypt, St. Antony quitted his cell to follow those that were going to become the victims of Christ, saying to his disciples, "Let us go to the glorious triumphs of our brethren, that we may share with them in the fight, or at least be spectators of their conflict." He was in hopes of obtaining for himself the crown of martyrdom, but could not deliver himself up, nor obtain permission to associate himself with the glorious confessors that were condemned to the mines, or confined in the prisons. However, when any were brought before the judge, he accompanied them to the court, and with great liberty and diligence exhorted them to constancy and perseverance; and when they were sentenced to die, he rejoiced as much in their victory as if it had been his own, and failed not to accompany them to the place of execution, to be a witness of

(a) Mark xii. 33.

their happy triumph. The judge, seeing the courage and zeal of Antony and his companions, published an order prohibiting any of the monks to be present at court during the trials of the Christians, and enjoining them all to depart from the city. Upon these orders the others departed for that day; but Antony, fearing nothing, washed his garments, and took the next opportunity to present himself in a more distinguished place, in sight of the judge, desiring nothing more than to suffer for Christ. But God was pleased to accept of his good-will, and to reserve His servant for the benefit of innumerable souls. Antony continued assisting and encouraging the confessors of Christ upon all occasions, till the storm of persecution was blown over, and then returned with new fervour to his former solitude, where he redoubled his watching and fasting.

After the holy bishop St. Abraham retired to his cell, it is related that his brother, dying in the world, left an only daughter, named Mary, an orphan seven years of age. This child was brought to her uncle in his wilderness, and he undertook to train her up to a religious life, and placed her for this purpose in a cell adjoining to his own, with a little window of communication, through which he instructed her. Here she made good use of the lessons she daily received from him, as to become a perfect model of piety and penance, in which happy state she persevered for twenty years, till a false religious, or rather a wolf in sheep's clothing, under pretence of coming to be edified by the conversation of her uncle, found means to tempt her to sin, and ceased not till she was so unhappy as to quit her cell and yield to his temptation. The horror and remorse that

followed her crime was so excessive, that it threw her into despair; so that instead of rising after her fall, and returning to her uncle, to confess and do penance for her sin, she was resolved to fly from him, and accordingly went to a distant town, where she abandoned herself to a sinful course of life. The saint having observed that for two days he had not heard her sing psalms, according to her custom, called out to her to know the cause of her silence; and as no answer was returned, it presently occurred to his recollection, that she was the dove he had seen, in a vision, swallowed up by a dragon. His grief for the loss of his dear child became inexpressible; he wept and prayed for her without ceasing, till at the end of two years, having heard where she was, and the wicked course of life to which she had abandoned herself, he took the resolution of seeking after the lost sheep, in order to bring her back to Christ's fold. In order thereto he procured, through the means of a friend, a horse, together with a soldier's habit, and a large cap or hat, which covered a great part of his face, and taking some money with him, went to the inn in which she lived, where, having ordered a splendid supper to be prepared, he told the host that he had heard much of the beauty of a young woman in his house, whose name was Mary, and desired she might sup with him. Supper being ended, and the waiters having retired, he took off his cap, and mingling tears with his words, "My daughter," said he, (for so he was used to call her), "don't you know me?—My child, did I not bring you up?—What has befallen you?—Who is the murderer that has killed your soul?—Where is that angelical habit that you formerly wore?—Where that admirable

purity ?—Where are those tears which you poured out in the presence of God ?—Where those watchings employed in singing the divine praises ?—Where that holy austerity that made you take pleasure in lying on the bare ground ?—Why did you not, after your first fall, come presently to acquaint me with it, since I should certainly have done penance for you, with my friend Ephrem, who has been ever since under an unspeakable affliction on your account ?—Why had you so little confidence in me ? Alas ! who is there without sin but God alone ?" On hearing these words she stood like one struck dumb, and motionless with confusion and horror ; but it was not without extreme difficulty, and after many affecting speeches, and lively representations of the tender mercies of God to repenting sinners, and even promises to take all her sins upon himself, that she at length came to the resolution of returning to her cell. Then prostrating herself at his feet, she spent the remainder of the night in prayers and tears.

FIFTEENTH DAY.

"Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry, and you gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me to drink; I was a stranger, and you took me in; naked, and you covered me; sick, and you visited me; I was in prison, and you came to me—as long as you did it to one of these little children you did it to me."(a)—*Our Blessed Saviour.*

"In charity we must be cheerful and prompt, knowing that by serving our fellow-creatures, we serve God in His members, and that He regards a service done to our neighbour as done to Himself."—*St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi.*

This saint always regarded God in all whom she served, and taught her novices to do the same, saying,—"If you wish to serve the sisters with a true and pure love, regard them as the living images of God, the spouses of the Word, or as the temples of the Holy Ghost, and sisters of the angels, that so you may bear them reverence and love, may serve them with true affection, and be one heart and one soul with them. I love them," she said, "because Jesus loved them, and endured the greatest sufferings for their love." She most especially manifested her zeal and charity towards three classes of persons in the monastery, the novices, the lay-sisters, and the sick.

This idea that our blessed Saviour is especially represented in the destitute, the wretched, and the poor, was so deeply impressed on the heart of blessed Nicholas Fattore, that he found the greatest delight in affording them every possible assistance. Once, a canon of the cathedral asked the holy man to accompany him on some affair connected with the glory of God. As they were going out at

(a) Matt. xxv. 34, 35, 36.

the door, the canon told him that if they chanced to meet any poor man covered with sores, he particularly requested that he would not kneel down to kiss his feet, as was his general custom, because instead of this, he would himself bestow a liberal alms, which would be far more serviceable to the poor man. Having made this agreement they set out, and as it happened, met no beggars on the road, but on reaching the cathedral they found a poor man, completely covered with sores, standing at the door. No sooner did Nicholas spy him out than he rushed forward, fell down at his feet, tenderly embraced him, and began to lick his wounds. The canon was horrified, and seizing blessed Nicholas by the arm, tried to raise him, saying at the same time, "Father Nicholas, is this according to our agreement?" With a beaming countenance he replied, "Ah! sir, this poor creature is too lively a representation of Jesus Christ; of Jesus covered with wounds for the love of us! Say, what compact could keep back a Christian, and hinder him from kissing the sweet wounds of our divine Redeemer? Oh, what a beautiful act of Christian generosity it would be on your part, sir, if you, too, would kneel down with me, and kiss our loving Lord in this poor member!" These words went straight to the heart of the noble ecclesiastic, who immediately knelt down at the poor man's feet, kissed them several times, shedding likewise an abundance of tears.

A similar spirit of charity animated St. Jane Frances de Chantal, who bore a particular love to the sick and destitute, in whom she beheld an image of her most beloved and bountiful Saviour. All those who were afflicted with the

cancer, leprosy, and other similar maladies, were wont to come from a distance to her for relief, and they were most cordially received and carefully attended to. She washed their wounds with her own hands, and dressed them with care and attention, occasionally doing this act of charity on her knees. Those who were in her service at that time have testified that they have often seen her kiss the wounds of the poor, and apply her blessed lips to their sores, so as to make the by-standers shudder.

One day a good peasant, on his way home from the market at Autun, found near a tree a poor lad infected with leprosy, and abandoned by all; the good man placed him on his mule, and hastened to conduct him to St. Frances, who gladly put him into the bed which she had ever ready for the use of the poor. There she waited on him, and having made a parcel of his rags, to clean them from the vermin, she took the scissors, and with her own hand cut off his hair, and put oil on his diseased head, gave him a white night-cap, and then burnt his hair, with her own hands, being unwilling that any of her servants should touch it. The length of time that this poor lad had lived without eating, required that he should be fed often, and with little at a time; this charitable nurse of the poor fed him herself, and visited him three or four times a day, putting oil on his head, and cleaning his sores herself. When it happened that she was occupied with her father-in-law, or was otherwise engaged, she sent one of her servants with the food for her dear patient, who, not being so inured to mortification as her mistress, laid what she carried near his bed, and immediately left him, holding her nose all the

time. On such occasions the poor boy used to cry, saying:—"When madam comes she does not hold her nose, but sits near me, and instructs me how to save my soul; but when she cannot come I am abandoned by all." After she had done everything for this poor lad, it pleased God to call him hence, to be her friend in the eternal tabernacles. She watched by his bedside at night, and made him receive the last sacraments. When he was about to breathe his last, he turned round, and with clasped hands asked her blessing: she gave it, and embracing him, said,—"Go, my child, with confidence in God. You shall be carried with greater pomp than Lazarus by a band of angels to the place of repose."

There was, in the neighbourhood of Monthélon, a very handsomé young woman, who, to please her husband, cut a wart that she had on her nose, but did it so badly, that a cancer came on, which rendered her a disgusting object, whereon her husband, faithless to the conjugal vow, separated himself from her. When this poor creature found herself deserted, she had recourse to that charitable refuge where the poor were invariably succoured. St. Jane Frances attended to her cancer, which was eating her face with great activity, visiting her three times a day; but as the cancer was exceedingly virulent, she could not prevent its progress, so that the sufferer became a frightful object. The poor creature was confined to her small room, deserted by all but the saint, who visited her daily for three years and a half, during which the cancer had destroyed her gums and teeth, and had ascended as far as the ears, so that the face had more the form of a death's head than a living visage, excepting her eyes, which

only made her look yet more hideous. The artifices used by the saint's family to prevent her visiting this poor creature are scarcely credible; they did not, however, succeed.

No less wonderful was the charity of St. Vincent of Paul towards the needy, and especially towards the galley-slaves. He endeavoured to relieve them in the very point in which they had most to suffer. What afflicted him above all, when he was at Marseilles, was the pitiful state of those who fell sick. Always in chains, devoured by vermin, overwhelmed with pains, almost eaten up by corruption and infection, these living corpses already experienced the horrors of the grave. Vincent could not see, without deep emotion, men formed to the image of God—Christians redeemed with the blood of Jesus Christ—dying like brutes, and he did not give himself any rest until he had succeeded in relieving their misery.

SIXTEENTH DAY.

"Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is scandalized, and I am not on fire?"(a) "To the weak I became weak, that I may gain the weak; I became all things to all men, that I may save all."(b) —*The Apostle St. Paul.*

THERE are few, even amongst the saints, who have imitated so perfectly this great Apostle in the practice of charity as the blessed Father Claver did during his mission at Carthagena amongst the negroes. As soon as he was informed that a ship-load of negroes entered the port, he immediately revived, his eyes brightened, and his pale emaciated face assumed a hue of health quite unusual to it. After falling on his knees to thank God for the favour, he inquired the language of the new slaves, then seeking out his interpreters, he hastened to the ship, carrying with him a provision of biscuits, preserves, brandy, tobacco, lemons, and such other things as delight those poor savages.

When by his charity he had won them to himself, he strove to gain them to God: first inquiring how many had been born during the voyage, that he might baptize them; he next visited those who were dangerously ill, that he might prepare them either for baptism or confession, as the case might be. Many of them died immediately after receiving this grace, so that it seemed as if Divine Providence had preserved them to give His servant the consolation of saving them. Such favours animated him to redoubled exertion, persuaded that so

(a) 2 Cor. xi. 29. (b) 1 Cor. ix. 22.

great a happiness can never be too dearly bought. He caressed all the sick, one after another, cleansing their filth and wounds, feeding them himself, and when taking leave, he tenderly embraced each of them, leaving them as much surprised as delighted with kindness which they had so little expected; and they felt convinced that slavery at Carthagena was preferable to liberty in their own country. When the day of general disembarkation came, he was punctual to the moment, and was there with his usual stock of provisions, and accompanied by some slaves from the same country; he gave them his hand to help them ashore, received the sick in his arms and placed them in the carts he had procured expressly for them; there was no one to whom he did not show affection, insomuch that all who witnessed it were struck with admiration; nor did he quit them till he had conducted them, as it were, in triumph to their lodgings; feeling more honoured at entering Carthagena in such company, than conquerors did of old when they triumphantly entered Rome. When the slaves were safely lodged, he visited each one of them, promising to come again, and recommended them most earnestly to their masters.

All the pains and trouble of the holy man to instruct and baptize the negroes, was nothing compared to what he did to teach them how to approach the Sacrament of Penance properly. It was here that he was able to satisfy to the full, his zeal and mortification. The Jesuit's church was small, damp, excessively hot, and swarming with musquittoes, attracted there by its vicinity to the sea. Father Claver's confessional was close to the door, exposed to a broiling sun till mid-day; he entered it as soon as the first Mass began, and

remained there till a late hour, hearing the confessions of all who presented themselves. At the slightest sign of the sacristan, he returned to it immediately, and did not leave until he had satisfied every one who wished to come to him.

On great festivals he entered the confessional at three o'clock in the morning, and remained there until called away to say the last Mass. So long as there were any negroes for confession, he would hear no others; but after them he received the poor and the children belonging to the charity schools. If, as it often happened, persons of rank mingled in the crowd, he gently sought to send them elsewhere, telling the men they could find other confessors, and giving the ladies to understand that his confessional was too narrow for the compass of their gowns, being only suited to poor negresses.

During the rest of the year, when not engaged in the missions, one of his chief occupations was to assist the sick negroes; he kept an exact list of them, and commissioned trusty persons to give him timely notice if they were in danger.

Whatever pleasure grace might impart to him in the performance of such services, it is certain that nature often recoiled at them, but his zeal made him triumph over repugnance. The following is a remarkable instance. Being called to the house of a rich merchant to hear the confession of a negro who was covered with ulcers, he found him extended in a corner, where he had been thrown to save others from the insupportable effluvia arising from his body. The master of the house and four other Spaniards followed him at a distance, curious to witness his extraordinary charity, of which they had heard so much. At

the first sight of this putrid body he felt tempted to turn back, but the next moment, confounded at his cowardice, he retired into a corner and took a severe discipline, reproaching himself for not having courage to serve a brother redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ. He then returned to the sick man, approaching him on his knees, and devoutly kissed all his wounds. Not satisfied with hearing his confession, he remained a long time consoling him. Those who were watching him then withdrew, full of astonishment and respect; but he, when he had quite satisfied his charity, went away with as composed a look as if he had done nothing extraordinary.

It was chiefly in epidemic and contagious disorders that the holy eagerness of this holy missionary presented a spectacle well worthy of the admiration, both of angels and of men. Most of the other ministers dared not approach; the most courageous, after a few efforts, were overpowered; he alone was unshaken, and as the greatest confidence was placed in him, so the greater part of the labour fell to his share. He took the most loathsome in his arms, cleaned their wounds, fed them, and performed the most menial services for them; his example sometimes gave courage to the most delicate. "Look," said a virtuous mother to her daughter, "see that holy man kissing wounds that we scarcely venture to look at; is it not shameful in us to do nothing for the service of our brethren?"

SEVENTEENTH DAY.

"He who causes a sinner to be converted from the error of his way shall save his soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins."(a)—*St. James.*

"The highest amongst all divine works is to co-operate in the salvation of souls."—*St. Dionysius.*

ALTHOUGH the saints were all careful to relieve their neighbours in their temporal necessities, yet their zeal shone more conspicuously in helping them in their spiritual necessities.

It is related of St. Liguori that as soon as he saw a sinner at his feet, he hastened to imprint on his heart a thorough hatred of sin. He took, as it were, his heart in his hands to enlighten it and make it comprehend the extent of his misery. "Such poor sinners," said he to his brethren, "are that one cherished sheep for whom Jesus Christ abandoned the ninety-nine, to seek it and bring it back upon his shoulders. If any of you are horrified, like the young Tobias, at the sight of some monstrous fish, because it bristles with scales, bring it to me, and from the gall of its sins I will produce a sacrifice for Jesus Christ."

One evening when the blessed Leonard was returning as usual to the convent, he perceived a man following him, who seemed in great distress; the servant of God stopped and began to speak to him, and inquired what had happened, for he was ready to give him assistance. The poor man fell on his knees, and replied, weeping:—"Father, you see at your feet the greatest sinner on earth!" Blessed Leonard was touched by

(a) James v. 20.

this reply, and said, "And you, my son, have found one who will be to you a loving father." He then encouraged him to be reconciled to God, conducting him to the convent, and having heard his confession, sent him home quite joyful, released of a heavy load of sins, which for some time past had burthened his conscience.

When any great sinner was conducted to the feet of the venerable Ludovico Da Ponte, his heart leapt with joy, and there was no mark of charity which he did not employ in order to gain him to God; he embraced him tenderly, pressed him to his bosom, and encouraged him fearlessly to expose all the wounds of his soul, reminding him that God was his good Father, and that Jesus Christ had died for the salvation of sinners; that if he sincerely detested his past sins, with a resolution not to offend again, he himself would stand bail for him, and obtain his pardon from God; which expression alone usually sufficed to penetrate the hardest hearts, and move them to contrition. In the application of remedies and preservatives, the holy man perfectly understood what St. Basil calls "Artem gratiæ," well knowing that the same remedy must not be applied to all in equal measure: he first duly considered the quality of the malady, the constitution of the invalid, and then prescribed to each one his particular remedy, more or less active according to necessity, exhorting him to return to him again soon, with the assurance of finding a prompt remedy, and promising, in conclusion, that he would not fail to implore for him, from the Father of all mercies, the strengthening aid of His graces.

The blessed Sebastian Valfré burned with a similar zeal for the salvation of souls, which he

particularly displayed when the Piedmontese were at war with the French, and the city of Turin was shut up by the siege. No sooner were the wounded transported to the military hospital than he, with all love, received and comforted them, fortifying them with the holy sacraments. And not satisfied with this, ever fearing lest some should die at their posts, he anxiously went around the bastions, running up at the first cry he heard; nay, more, forgetting himself, he stayed in the very street in which, from the continued cannonading, the danger was greatest, there exhorting to sentiments of contrition, and confessing and assisting, the unhappy persons who were the victims of the rage of war. Those condemned to death also experienced the measure of love Sebastian entertained for their souls. There was not one whom he did not prepare to receive the sacraments, and exhort him, even on the scaffold, to accept death with resignation.

A similar zeal for the salvation of sinners was felt by St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi, who did all in her power to help and assist them, especially by means of her prayers and of those of the community. Speaking to her sisters she maintained, that one reason why God separated them from the world was, that they might be assistants of Holy Church in the conversion of sinners. "Oh, ye novices," she would say, "could you but see the beauty of a soul in the grace of God, you would be so much enamoured of it, that you would do nothing else but ask souls of God; and, on the contrary, could a soul in mortal sin be placed before your eyes, you would do nothing but weep, and you would hate sin more than the devil himself, and always pray for the conversion of sinners."

EIGHTEENTH DAY.

"Let love be without dissimulation. Hating that which is evil, cleaving to that which is good. Loving one another with the charity of brotherhood, with honour preventing one another."(a) —*The Apostle St. Paul.*

"All things whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you also to them, for this is the law and the prophets."(b)— *Our Blessed Saviour.*

St. Liguori gave a very striking proof of this sincere and disinterested charity when he saw himself, by the authority of the Pope, stript of the office of president of his congregation, and the honour conferred on Father de Paul. He loved the new president as if he had been elected by himself, and congratulated him on all his good success. "I hear," he wrote to him, "of what the Pope has conferred on you at Villetri and in other places, and I pray God to continue to be favourable to you. I participate in your joy, and I advise you to profit by the favours of the Pope to procure the glory of God in all places. I have heard of the missions of Sabina; establish them there and wherever else you can. All your success consoles me, because I hope that it will only serve to extend the glory of God. When you make any further progress, let me know it, that I may thank God for it; as I will always do when good befalls you. Pray to God for me and for our brothers, in order that all may be employed in serving Jesus Christ. Pray for my good end; I shall not live much longer: and I pray that God will make you continually increase in His love, and

(a) Rom. xii. 9, 10. (b) Matt. vii. 12.

that He will send you fresh foundations as well as subjects."

Similar was the love which the blessed Father Claver bore to his negroes. He loved them with so pure and disinterested a love, that in them he sought and saw only God, and souls redeemed by His blood; and with a zeal so eager and ardent, that when quite exhausted with labour, he grieved at having, as yet, done nothing for his brethren. It was this ardent zeal which drew him from Spain and across the seas, to suffer a long martyrdom of forty years in a country where every thing conspires to afflict nature; but his disinterested love of his neighbour, which attracted him so strongly to the poor, the miserable, and the slaves, whilst he did not even know the names of the greater part of the rich and distinguished inhabitants of Carthagena, was still more remarkable. To instruct the rude and ignorant, to console the afflicted, visit the captives, succour the infirm, and provide for the necessities of the miserable, were the delights of his heart. Many persons worthy of credit have attested, that during the whole period of his apostleship in Carthagena, not a day passed in which he did not practise some heroic act of charity.

We read of St. Catherine of Bologna, that she had the sincerest and tenderest affection for all her sisters. No mother who loves her children better than herself could be gentler or more indulgent than she was; she united, too, a sort of respect with her tenderness, and used to call the religious her mistresses; and when they asked her the reason, she answered, "It is because you are the spouses of my Master."

Having learned one day that one of her daughters was strongly tempted to leave the con-

vent, she called her, and said to her, in her kindest manner, "My beloved sister, I wish to see you happy, persevering in your vocation, and struggling bravely against your invisible enemies. Therefore, I offer to remain in purgatory for you till the judgment day to pay your debts. I will be answerable for your faults and the penance they merit, and I will give you a share in all my spiritual treasures, if I have any, or can gain any; in return, promise me not to leave the religious profession, but to remain faithful to Jesus Christ, as you have promised Him." The sister, when she saw how far the mother's charity went, was very much affected, and immediately implored her prayers. And this was not in vain, for she soon became very happy, and thought no more of quitting her holy profession. From the great desire she had to see all her religious happy, she used to say to them, "If by accident anything distresses you, which I do not observe, and you have not the courage to tell me of it, I authorize you to mention it to any one of the superiors you choose. If the trouble is of such a nature that they cannot apply a remedy, come to me, my dear daughters, and I will aid you by every means in my power; whether it be in the day or at night, it makes no difference; if I am asleep, wake me up, and whatever your affliction may be, whether bodily or mental, do not fear to let me know it. Let there be no preferences, no exception of persons amongst us, but let us all be of one heart, and united together in peace and love; let us, in a word, lead a truly apostolic life. We ought to share together our tribulations and consolations, and to pray to God for each other with all our hearts." She could never endure disputes or murmurs, and when she

saw anything of the kind among the sisters, she severely reprimanded those who were culpable. This was a proof how much these faults displeased her, for nothing was less natural to her than severity; after a few sharp words she used to change at once her expression and tone of voice, which showed the sister who had been reprimanded that the holy mother had not acted from anything like anger, but solely from a tender charity and an affectionate desire for her welfare, and as Catherine used still to fear on such occasions that the sister might not be able to support the humiliation, she would say to her, "Come, take courage; I wish you really to be my daughter, and as I am your mother, I ought to pray for you, and that is what I am going to do now in the church. Will you come with me?" She used then to go and kneel before the Blessed Sacrament, and remain there with her arms extended until her daughter had recovered her usual peace of mind.

NINETEENTH DAY.

"Put ye on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, the bowels of mercy, benignity, humility, modesty, patience. Bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if any have a complaint against another; even as the Lord has forgiven you, so do you also. But above all these things have charity, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of Christ rejoice in your hearts, wherein also you are called in one body."(a)—*The Apostle St. Paul.*

"Let each one bear his brother in charity. We have each our faults. He who has to put up with his brother's fault to day, will have to be borne with himself to-morrow."—*St. Liguori.*

St. Catherine of Bologna was most particular in this point. "Nothing," she said, "ought to scandalize us in the servants of God. If they have any fault, we should be indulgent in regard to it, and say, 'This one has his fault and I have mine.'" She used to say to her daughters, "You must patiently support all your sisters, for it is great blindness to demand from them all the same physical and mental constitution. Unless we have this kind of patience, we often offend the Holy Spirit;" and on this subject she never failed to quote these words of the great apostle: "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so you shall fulfil the law of Christ."(b)

"No language," she used also to say, "can overrate the peace of mind which an ingenuous person enjoys, who interprets everything favourably, never murmurs against any one, and judges no one; some waves may indeed dash against him from time to time, but they disturb his will only very little; or rather his will is so closely united with God's will, that it leaves all judgments to

(a) Coloss. iii. 12, 14. (b) Gal. vi. 2.

Him, and forbids itself any inquiry into the conduct of others. A mind thus constituted is tranquil in the midst of storms; and it is not difficult to understand how this should be, for instead of being anxious about its neighbour or itself, it is only bent on serving its Creator as well in struggles as in seasons of peace, and thus conflict and peace are matters of indifference to it. The one suits it as well as the other, it regards them both with the same eye, and receives them both in the same way, because the one and the other are sent by the same Providence, whose designs it ever adores, as the most suitable to help us to attain its greater good."

St. Austin says, that one of the things which imparts the greatest beauty and splendour to charity, is to know how to support the ill-humour and imperfections of our neighbour. For if you are able to suffer nothing from your brethren, and have not sufficient sweetness of disposition to bear patiently their defects, be assured, that what reflection soever you may make, what means soever you may use, and what remedies soever you may apply, you can never be able to preserve charity. If a love that has no other source than flesh and blood is able to accommodate itself without any pain to whatsoever it suffers in assisting a sick person, as we daily learn from what mothers undergo in bringing up their children, or in assisting a sick husband; without doubt, spiritual love, which has its origin in God himself, should prompt us to undergo the infirmities and weaknesses of our brethren with all patience and sweetness possible.

The author of the "Imitation of Christ" strongly recommends the same spirit of charity by the following words: "Endeavour to be patient in

supporting others' defects and infirmities, of what kind soever they be, because thou also hast many things which others must bear with. If thou canst not make thyself such a one as thou wouldst, how canst thou expect to have another according to thy liking? We would willingly have others perfect, and yet we mend not our own defects; we would have others strictly corrected, but we are not willing to be corrected ourselves. The large liberty of others displeases us, and yet we would not be denied anything we ask for. We are willing that others should be bound up by laws, and we suffer not ourselves by any means to be restrained. Thus it is evident how seldom we weigh our neighbour in the same balance with ourselves; if all were perfect, what should we have to suffer from others for God's sake? But now God has so disposed things, that we may learn to bear one another's burdens, for there is no man without defects; no man without his burden; no man sufficient for himself; no man wise enough for himself; but we must support one another, comfort one another; assist, instruct, and admonish one another.

"It is no great thing to be able to converse with them that are good and meek, for this is naturally pleasing to all. And every one would willingly have peace, and love those best that agree with him. But to live peaceably with those that are harsh and perverse, or disorderly, or such as oppose us, is a great grace, and a highly commendable and manly exploit."

TWENTIETH DAY.

"See that none render evil for evil to any man, but ever follow that which is good towards each other, and towards all men."(a)—*The Apostle St. Paul.*

"Not rendering evil for evil, nor railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing; for unto this are you called, that you may inherit a blessing. If you suffer anything for justice sake, blessed are ye; for it is better doing well, (if such be the will of God), to suffer than doing ill."(b)—*The Apostle St. Peter.*

Most wonderful was the charity which the holy mother, Jane Frances of Chantal, exhibited on this point whilst she lived with her father-in-law. The old man had a servant, to whom he had entrusted his house and all his property; and nothing is more insupportable than a servant who has become a mistress. This woman carried everything with so high a hand, that the humble saint dared not give a glass of wine to a messenger without her consent. The holy servant of God was also obliged to undertake the care of five of this woman's children, who were treated as if on a level with her own, and the servant often roused the anger of the old man against the saint, and even occasionally herself insulted her, but this faithful friend of God returned good for evil, and became the servant and teacher of the children; she taught them to read, combed their hair, and occasionally dressed them.

It was, certainly, a grievous thing for the saint to see this woman wasting her father-in-law's property, and acting as if she was absolute mistress of everything; and she endeavoured to remedy it:

(a) 1 Thess. v. 15. (b) 1 Pet. iii. 9, 14, 17.

but perceiving that she disturbed her father-in-law, who wished that everything should be left to the management of this creature, she resolved to be patient, and to exercise no authority but in serving the poor.

She once overheard some of the servants saying that they would, at M. de Chantal's death, cut off this woman's nose, and drag her to the ditch, whereon this servant of God replied, "No, I shall be her defence; if God has used her as my cross, why should I wish her any ill?" She never permitted either her children or her attendants to tell her anything that this woman had said or done against her; and when it was suggested that it was unjust for this servant to manage the house for her father-in-law, she was wont to reply, "God has so ordered it, that I may have time for works of piety."

After the saint became a religious, a certain lady, who was annoyed because she would not permit her to act in a certain way, contrary to the rule and the wellbeing of the community, opposed every action performed by the saint, and deterred several persons from joining her institute: but although this person insulted the holy mother, calling her ungrateful, and saying all that was suggested to her by passion, she was unable to irritate her. On leaving the parlour, the saint said to the sister who accompanied her, "Let us go and recommend this dear soul to God," without hinting at the manner in which she had been treated, and when she was taken ill, the holy mother waited on her as if she had been one of her best friends.

This saint wrote a great many texts from Holy Writ on love to our neighbour. The first

was, *Do good to the ungrateful, to imitate the kindness of our heavenly Father;* the second, *Jesus Christ hath loved us, and washed us in His blood.*

She wrote thus to a religious who felt some difficulty as regards charity towards her neighbour. "My dear daughter, meditate often on these words, *Jesus Christ hath loved us, and washed us in His blood.* Why has He so loved us, since we are such vile creatures? He has loved us by an excess of charity, because He wished to wash us in His Blood; for He waited not until we should be washed, to love us. Believe me, my dear daughter, we should love our neighbour without examination, altogether poor, deformed, or whatever he is; and if there were any means whereby we could wash away his imperfections by our blood, we should give it to the last drop."

A religious had written to her, saying, that another religious was exceedingly cool to her, and that it afflicted her deeply. Our saint replied, "My dear daughter, it is not one of the maxims of charity to be overcome by evil; be so exact, I beg of you, in following the maxims of the Son of God, that the heat of your cordial charity may thaw the coldness which is in the heart of your sister."

St. Joseph Calasanctius once received information from one of his religious whom he had sent to Messina, to found a house there at the request of the senate, that a certain individual was propagating a thousand calumnies against the order and its founder. By way of answer, the saint ordered prayers to be offered up for the unfortunate slanderer: such is the vengeance of the just! Ambrogio Ambrosi, a youth of considerable talent,

but wholly uncultivated, was admitted by the saint into his order; he was instructed in the Latin tongue, and was taught mathematics, in which he made considerable progress. The saint sent him to teach the latter at Florence, where he acquired such reputation as to be appointed master to the young princes, John, Charles, and Leopold. At the solicitations of these princes, the objections and usual cautions of the general were removed, and he permitted Ambrogio to be promoted to holy orders; but the sacred character and formidable ministry of the priesthood, instead of rendering him humble, aroused within him an excessive arrogance. Repairing to Rome, he made it his employment to insult, ill-treat, and deride the saintly founder, both before his face and behind his back, in public as well as in private. Joseph could not but know and feel all these affronts, rendered doubly atrocious by the ingratitude of one who had been so signally benefitted by him, and by the audacity which prompted a subject to act thus towards a superior: but notwithstanding all this, he incessantly endured, incessantly pardoned, and incessantly prayed to our Lord for the salutary amendment of this wayward son.

TWENTY-FIRST DAY.

"Let all bitterness, and anger, and indignation, and clamour, and blasphemy, be put away from you with all malice. And be ye kind one to another, merciful, forgiving one another, even as God hath forgiven you in Christ."(a)—*The Apostle St. Paul.*

"How patiently Christ, the King of heaven and earth, bore with the Apostles, enduring at their hands many incivilities and unbeliefs, they being but poor and rough fishermen. How much more ought we to bear with our neighbour, if he treats us with unkindness."—*St. Philip.*

We read of the venerable Benedict Labré, that in his youth, whilst living in his uncle's house, two persons began to persecute him, emboldened by his imperturbable patience. One of his companions insulted him with jests and contempt, treating him as a hypocrite. Benedict bore it in silence; he even interposed in his favour with his uncle, who had been informed of the affair by a servant, and who reproved him sharply and seemed inclined to chastise him. With still greater boldness, one of his uncle's servants insulted him, ill-treated him with words and actions of contempt, serving him in an uncivil manner. Benedict never once complained, or had recourse to his uncle; and not only did he suffer it patiently, he even showed pleasure in the affronts, as we find deposed by a person who witnessed it with admiration.

One of his confessors at Rome asked him if nothing ever happened to cause him disturbance, and being obliged to answer, he said that sometimes boys made a jest of him, ill-treating him with words and blows, considering him as a fool, and pelting him with stones, cabbage stalks and orange peel, without his giving them any provocation;

(a) Ephes. iv. 31, 32.

but these things gave him no trouble; he regarded derision and insults with indifference; he pitied the persons who thus acted and pardoned them from his heart between himself and God, without feeling any resentment, hatred, or rancour, but experiencing, on the contrary, interior tranquillity. Another confessor at Loretto obliged him to say with what feelings he regarded those who derided and ill-treated him; and he answered, "They are looked upon by me as true friends, because they give me an occasion of merit, and of fulfilling the precept of our Lord Jesus Christ, to love our enemies and pray for them."

That this was truly his disposition we see clearly from the opposition he made to a person, who, undertaking his defence in Rome, wished to make a complaint to the government of these bold people. "No," said the servant of God, "let no complaint be made; what we suffer for the love of Christ crucified is little." His acts of this sort were so heroic, that a confessor in Rome, surprised at the sublime perfection of his great soul, thought proper to give up his direction, in his humility considering it beyond his abilities.

Cassian relates that the Abbot Moses, disputing with the Abbot Macharius, and having said a cross and mortifying word, God presently chastised him on the spot, permitting the devil at the same time to possess him, and such a foul devil as made him speak all sorts of filthy and impure words; which punishment lasted till the Abbot Macharius, by his prayers, rescued him from slavery so wretched.

We read in the Chronicles of St. Francis, that an ancient brother permitted himself to be so transported with anger as to give some harsh and choleric words to his companion, in the presence

of a gentleman of Assisium: on perceiving that his companion was moved, and the secular also scandalised, he resolved to revenge this fault upon himself; wherefore, gathering together a great deal of dirt, he crammed it into his mouth; *Let my mouth*, says he, *eat this filth, since it has vomited out such gall and poison against my brother.* The secular was so surprised, and so edified by the fervour wherewith this good religious punished his own fault, that he became more attached than ever to those that lived under that rule, and offered both his person and whatever belonged to him to the service of the order.

St. Dorotheus teaches us a mode of answering very humbly; which we may make use of when we are spoken harshly to. He says, that when any one speaks very sharply to us, or reprehends us for any faults, or reproaches us for what we have not been guilty of, we must always receive the correction with equal humility, and say:—*Dear brother, pardon me, and pray for me.* He learned this doctrine from an ancient father, who was wont to practise it himself, and to recommend it to others.

It is related of St. Francis of Assisium that, having for a time almost quite lost his sight by too much weeping, he sought to divert himself with one of the religious called brother Bernard, who had a very particular talent for discoursing of God, and with whom he sometimes spent whole nights in spiritual discourse. Having once sought him at his cell, which was in a remote part of the mountain; and having called out to him to come to a poor blind man, brother Bernard, who was at the time so wholly absorbed in God that he did not hear him call, made no answer to the saint,

who having called a second time, and finding he still made no answer, returned very sad, and murmuring within himself, that brother Bernard would not admit him into his cell. In this anxiety of mind, he went a little before his companion, and having put himself in prayer, he heard a voice that said, *Why art thou troubled? Is it reasonable that man should quit God for a creature? Brother Bernard was with Me when thou calledst him, and could not go to meet thee, nor answer thee, because he did not hear thee.* The saint, getting up at these words, returned presently to brother Bernard, to accuse himself of his fault, and to beg penance of him for it; finding him just risen from his prayer, he cast himself at his feet, declaring the suspicion he had harboured of him, and the reprehension he had received from God for it, and commanded him, in virtue of holy obedience, to punish him in the manner he should declare to him. Brother Bernard, fearing that the saint, according to his custom, would put himself upon some very extraordinary humiliation, and desirous to find out some means to excuse himself, answered, that he would do whatsoever he should ordain, upon condition he would also perform what he should desire of him. The saint, who was always readier to obey than to command, easily accepted the condition; and then, having laid himself all along on the ground upon his back, "I command you," says he, "in virtue of holy obedience, to put one of your feet upon my mouth, and then the other upon my neck, and that you pass three times over me in this manner, saying,—Remain here upon the ground, you wretched son of Peter Bernadone; whence couldst thou conceive so much pride in thyself, thou who art worthy to be

contemned by all?" When brother Bernard understood what the saint required of him, he doubted for some time whether he should comply with his orders; but, at last, to observe obedience and through fear of afflicting him, he resolved to do so, but executed his commands with all respect possible.

TWENTY-SECOND DAY.

"Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you. That you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven, who maketh His sun to rise upon the good and the bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust. For if you love them that love you, what reward shall you have? Do not even the publicans this? Be you, therefore, perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect."(a) — *Our Blessed Saviour.*

"If a man finds it very hard to forgive injuries, let him look at a crucifix, and think that Christ has shed all His blood for him, and not only forgave His enemies, but even prayed His heavenly Father to forgive them also. Let him remember also that when he says the *Pater noster* every day, instead of asking pardon for his sins, he is calling down vengeance upon himself." — *St. Philip.*

A YOUTH, who had fallen into Philip's hands, could not by any means be persuaded to forgive an injury which he had received. The saint did all he could to induce him, but his heart seemed only to get harder than ever. One day, seeing that no other means was of any avail, he took a crucifix and said to him very briskly, "Look at this, and think how much blood our Lord has shed

(a) Matt. v. 44, 45, 46, 48.

for the love of you; and He not only pardoned His enemies, but prayed the eternal Father to pardon them also. Do you not see, my poor child, that every day when you say the *Pater noster*, instead of asking pardon for your sins, you are calling down vengeance upon yourself?" When he had said this, he ordered him to kneel down and repeat after him a prayer to the crucifix, in which the saint, by exaggerating the hardness and obstinacy of his heart, showed clearly to him what a grievous sin he was committing. The youth obeyed and knelt down, but trying to repeat the prayer, he could not pronounce a word, but began trembling all over. He remained a long time in this state, and at last getting up, he said, "Here I am, father, ready to obey you; I pardon every injury I have ever received; your reverence has only to order me to make what satisfaction you please for my sin, and I will do it directly." Which promise he faithfully fulfilled.

The venerable Alacoque had a great deal to suffer from several persons who greatly injured her reputation, by representing her as a weak deluded soul. But the venerable mother, instead of taking the least revenge, or even making any complaint, bore them a special affection, and recommended them particularly to God. Alluding to these persons, she says as follows:—"I felt continually urged to render all sorts of services and good offices to these true friends of my soul. I would willingly have sacrificed myself for them, not having any greater pleasure than to do them good and speak well of them. It was not I who did all this that I write, and shall have still to write (much against my inclination); it was my sovereign Master who had taken possession of my

will, and who would not allow me to form any complaint, or murmur, or feeling of resentment, against these persons, nor even permit me to be pitied, or meet with any sympathy in my sufferings. He told me that to those who had ill-treated Him He had behaved with the like meekness, and that when I could not help others speaking of them to me, He wished me to excuse them and lay all the blame on myself, adding (which is true) that my sins deserved a much greater punishment."

The same venerable mother, having heard on one occasion that the novices were grievously offended at the ill-treatment which she received from her opponents, severely reproved them, as failing in the submission they owed to the orders of God; she told them it was self-love which was the secret motive of their ardour, and she earnestly endeavoured to inspire them with the humble tranquillity with which her own heart was filled. "It is God Himself," said she, "who has sent us this cross, to prepare us for the festival; and instead of lovingly embracing it, we only endeavour to shake it off and rid ourselves of it.... Whence comes this if it is not that we have too much love for ourselves, which makes us fear to lose our reputation and the good esteem of the world? This it is which makes us seek to justify our conduct; we believe that we are entirely innocent of the things of which we are accused, and that others are guilty. We think that they are quite in the wrong, and we in the right. Oh, believe me, my dear sisters, that humble souls are far from entertaining such thoughts, they always believe themselves more guilty than their accusers would make it appear! My God! if we knew what we lost by not profiting of opportunities of

suffering humiliations, we should be much more attentive to make a good use of those we meet with. We must not flatter ourselves. If we are not faithful on occasions of humiliation and contradiction, we shall lose the good graces of our Lord, who wishes that we love and regard, as our best friends and benefactors, all those who cause us pain, or who furnish us with the opportunities of suffering."

We read of St. Jane Frances that she had copied with her own hand those words of our Lord: "If you salute your brethren only, what do you more? Do not also the heathens this? Love your enemies; do good to them that hate you." She said once, when obliged to speak, that she did not remember, after she had sacrificed herself to the service of God, ever having returned evil for evil, but that she had a great inclination to overcome evil by good. At another time she thus spoke on the subject of revenge: "I have such a horror of this vice, that I believe I should die through sorrow had I ever done any act through a spirit of revenge; nothing astonishes me more than to think how a Christian heart can have a thought of revenging itself, a thing so irreconcilable with the maxims of the Son of God." Once a person in low life taxed her, in exceedingly insulting language, with injustice and false charity. The blessed mother listened with a sweet and humble countenance to everything, and when he had finished, her only reply was: "May God bless you, my child;" then turning to the sisters who were near, she said: "Do you see how much this dear neighbour is disturbed; he is created after the image and likeness of God, and we must love him with our whole heart; let us go and pray for his

intention." Another no less passionate and indiscreet attack was made on her in the parlour, and the sister who was present said to her: "Indeed, my mother, it cannot be the intention of the bishop that you should suffer such insults." The saint smiled, and said: "Pardon me, my dear daughter, his lordship has taught me to follow that advice of St. Paul: 'My beloved, avenge not yourselves, but suffer rather that they should do you wrong and injury.'" The next day a near relative of the person who had thus insulted her complained of her conduct to the Prince de Nemours, and a friend informed her of this complaint, in order that it might be explained to his royal highness. But she said to him sweetly: "My dear brother," (for she always called him so in holy friendship, for he was a nobleman of great virtue), "we must suffer something; if our neighbour did us no harm, how could we bear with him? I am delighted that, being the spouses of Jesus Christ, we are accused, like Him, before princes; all the remedy that I shall use will be to communicate for this person." A gentleman who was much annoyed at his sister having become a religious in one of the convents of the Visitation, after doing everything that lay in his power to induce her to return to the world, without success, addressed the blessed mother in the most bitter language, to which she replied with the greatest mildness; this, however, only served to annoy him yet more. Our saint, perceiving that she could not calm him by the honey of her words, resolved to adopt another course, and induced the postulant to leave a considerable portion of her property to her brother, saying that everything ought to be done to bring back a neigh-

bour into the path of charity; and she also made her give him a pearl chain which she had wished to present to the convent, saying: "Give, my dear daughter, the pearls of the world to the world, in order to lead back your brother to holy charity, which is the precious jewel of Jesus Christ."

A person once asking her pardon for many things he had formerly said against her, the saint replied: "No, I beg you not to think of it; I know nothing about it, and by the grace of God I have no memory to recall what has been done to my prejudice. When once things are suffered for God, what have we to do with them again?" One of the sisters wrote once to her, that she desired to go to another house, because she could not remain with those who had humbled and opposed her; whereupon she replied: "Lord Jesus, in what school, my dear child, have you been brought up, that you have not yet learned to suffer from your neighbour? With whom did Jesus Christ live? Was it not with a thief who murmured at the honours paid to His Divine Person, one who despised Him so much as to say at a festival that what was done for Him was lost? Was it not with a traitor who sold Him for a small sum of money? Oh, my daughter, how ignorant are we in this lesson of bearing with our neighbour! Alas, what a pity that, at the least shadow of contempt or contradiction, we begin to display our want of charity. O my dear daughter, make use of this consideration by which I have already cured many others. Where do you wish to dwell for ever? Without doubt you desire your salvation; the dear soul with whom you are at issue is also hastening to the same goal. Tell me, my dear daughter, how do you think that God will unite you for eternity

in the same dwelling, if you cannot, for His love, live together for the short moment of your mortal life? Never think of separating from your neighbour, for you would thereby separate yourself from God." Another religious got one of her friends to tell the saint that she could no longer live with a person, whom she loved but to whom she could not resolve to speak. "I shall make no other reply," said our saint, "except that you may tell her from me that if she does not bear with her neighbour, our Lord will say to her at the hour of death: 'I have loved you with an eternal love, and I still love you because you are my work, but I cannot see you to speak to you, and therefore we must separate; so depart from me.'"

TWENTY-THIRD DAY.

"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in any fault, you who are spiritual instruct such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so you shall fulfil the law of Christ."(a)

"We beseech you, brethren, rebuke the unquiet, comfort the feeble minded, support the weak, be patient towards all men."(b)
—*The Apostle St. Paul.*

St. Thomas of Villanova, having been informed that a certain ecclesiastic, whom he had several times reproved for his bad conduct, still continued to scandalize the world by his immoralities, sent for him to his house, and taking him privately into his oratory, laid before him, in a forcible manner, the miserable state

(a) Gal. vi. 1, 2. (b) 1 Thess. v. 14.

in which he lived, and the pernicious example his depraved morals gave to every one; showing him, at the same time, the punishment which his crimes deserved. "However," said he, "as it is my clemency which has fomented your bad conduct, and as it seems to me you have continued your disorderly life only because I have delayed to punish you, I resolve to bear the penalty myself;" so saying, he prostrated himself before a crucifix, and began severely to discipline his body, and continued this rigour until the guilty man could no longer suffer the remorse of his conscience, and terrified at seeing this proof of the excessive charity of his good prelate, threw himself at his feet, saying,—"My lord, cease, in the name of God. Give me that discipline, I beseech you, that I may expiate my sins by my own blood, not by the effusion of yours. Why should the innocent suffer for the guilty? No; I promise you, in the presence of this adorable crucifix, so entirely to change my life and manners, that for the future you shall be perfectly satisfied with me; and for what is passed I ask no favour from your goodness. Treat me according to the most rigorous justice. Impose on me what penance you shall think proper, for there is nothing that I will not do, by the grace of God, to satisfy Him for my offences." The saint embraced him tenderly, and praised God in his heart for the impression he had just made upon this poor miserable man. To fortify him in his pious resolution, he made him an exhortation so affectionate and so full of the spirit of God, that he went from his presence, his eyes bathed in tears, and for six months remained struck with astonishment and unable to recover the natural expres-

sion of his countenance. The rest of his days were passed in the service of God and his Church, in a most exemplary holiness of life.

It is related of the blessed Leonard that he loved his spiritual children with a stronger, sweeter, and more sincere affection than their natural parents could have felt for them. Thus, when necessary, he corrected and punished them as their rule directed, with so much efficacy, yet with so much charity, that even in his very chastisements the children acknowledged the love of their holy father, and were grateful to him for it. St. Alphonsus Liguori considered those who could have prevented some disorder by denouncing it to the superior, and yet had not done so, as so many traitors to the congregation. "That is not charity, but iniquity," said he. "When we are corrected for a fault in time, we easily amend, at least if we do not wish to adhere to our evil passions for ever; but if we are not reproved for it, the habit is formed and we are lost."

The holy mother, Jane Frances of Chantal, used to correct her daughters with the greatest mildness, and never recurred to severity but in very serious cases, and with much grief of her tender heart. She was often seen to enjoin penances with tears, saying, with the deepest feeling: "Would that I might suffer this penance myself, if my doing so would not be injurious to my sisters." She wrote as follows to one of the superiors:—"It is true, my daughter, I have a most exceeding love for the maxims which our blessed Father gave me, that we must bear with our neighbour, even unto foolishness; and since you desire that I should tell you how I understand this, I will tell you how I desire to practise it

myself; it is by bearing with ill humours and with certain little troublesome defects in others, which do no harm beyond that of annoying us, little follies, weaknesses, and acts of inconsiderateness, which are not noticed, and which affect myself alone; but, my dear daughter, with things which are voluntary and which disedify others, where there is malice and open obstinacy, our blessed Father undoubtedly never taught us to bear with them, without endeavouring, by every possible means, both of sweetness and severity, to bring about amendment."

TWENTY-FOURTH DAY.

"He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is no scandal in him."(a)—*The Apostle St. John.*

"Charity, far from seeking to find out evil, does all she can to avoid meeting with it; and when she does meet with it she turns aside, as if she had not seen it; moreover, on the slightest symptom of it she closes her eyes, that she may not see it, and believes, in all simplicity, that it was not evil, but the semblance or appearance of evil. But if, in spite of herself, she be forced to acknowledge that what she sees is really evil, she immediately turns her eyes away from it, and endeavours entirely to forget it."—*St. Francis of Sales.*

THE venerable Benedict Labré having once received the soup which was usually distributed to the poor at the door of Santa Maria sôpra Minerva, one of his companions, more insolent than the rest, had the audacity to take Benedict's portion from him and to empty it into his own

(a) 1 John ii. 10.

porringer. Another person would probably have made a great disturbance about it. But Benedict was not troubled; he did not resist, but yielded willingly, being ready to give up his cup also, according to the evangelical counsels, and he offered this also. The dispenser was much displeased, and reprimanded this man; but as he ran away, Benedict added charity to patience, excusing him because he wanted it more than himself, and was, therefore, more worthy of compassion. These words, joined to Benedict's dexterity, calmed the anger of the dispenser, and filled him with admiration at the consideration of his solid and wonderful charity.

Whilst St. Thomas of Villanova was archbishop, a charge was brought to him against one of his priests by a devout man, who lived retired from the world and of irreproachable life. The saint at first permitted him to speak, but the heat of his manner and his indiscreet zeal called for an interruption. "Gently, gently," said he; "dismiss all anger, and look a little into yourself. Remember that he of whom you are speaking is your brother, and as he is in the way of salvation, God can make him a saint notwithstanding his present weaknesses. You may fall into the same faults, or you may, perhaps, fall into a worse one. But supposing that you remain upright, tell me, to to whom are you indebted for it, if not to the pure mercy of God?"

It is related in the lives of the Fathers of the Desert, that a certain religious man, having received an injury from another, came to complain of it to one of the ancient fathers. The old man bade him, on this and the like occasions, to think with himself, that the injury or affront was not levelled

at him, but at his sins; and advised him to sit down contented, and to say, *All this is for my sins.*

Another good brother, when any person affronted, scoffed at, or injured him, used to rejoice, and say: "These are my friends, who are giving me an opportunity of advancing in virtue, whereas, they that extol and applaud are rather our enemies, according to that of Isaias: 'O my people, they that call thee blessed, the same deceive thee, and destroy the way of thy steps.'" A monk in a certain monastery, having committed a fault, for which he was severely rebuked by the rest of the brethren, went away to St. Antony. The brethren having followed him thither, in order to bring him back, warmly upbraided him with his faults in the presence of the saint, which he on his part as warmly denied. The holy abbot, Paphnucius, happening to be present, put a stop to the contention by the means of a parable:—"Whilst I stood one day on the banks of a river, I saw a man sunk in the mire up to his knees, when, behold, there came other men, stretching out their hands and endeavouring to help him out; but, instead of succeeding in their attempt, they pushed him further in, up to the neck." St. Antony, hearing the parable, and approving of the moral lesson it conveyed, said of St. Paphnucius, "Behold a man who has a right notion of the way of reclaiming the faulty, and of saving their souls." The brethren presently took the hint, and begging pardon for their heat, received the brother in the tender bowels of the mercy of Jesus Christ.

In the Chronicles of St. Francis a wonderful vision is related, with which our Lord favoured one of the companions of this saint, called brother

Leo. He saw one day a great company of the religious of his order, glittering with light and splendour, amongst whom there was one more bright than all the rest, out of whose eyes there came forth such resplendent rays, that the good brother was not able to behold their lustre. He asked who that person was, and it was answered him, that he was Blessed Bernard of Quintaval, the first companion of St. Francis, and that the light which darted from his eyes proceeded from the good interpretation he gave to whatever he saw in his neighbour, and also because he believed all the world better than himself. When he met the poor, all covered with rags and patches, *These*, said he to himself, *observe poverty far better than I;* and judged thus advantageously of them, on a supposition that their poverty was as voluntary as his own. When he saw persons of quality, richly clad, he said in his heart, *Perhaps these perform greater austerities than I do; perhaps they wear a hair cloth underneath their rich clothes, and secretly chastise their flesh, and that it is to avoid being surprised with vain-glory that they clothe themselves after this manner.* In fine, he always looked at the most pleasing side of every object, and the innocency of his eyes deserved to have such a recompense of glory bestowed upon them by God himself. Behold here after what manner we must judge of our neighbour; and this is that spirit which St. Dorotheus requires of us, when he says, if entering into your brother's cell, you find it all in disorder, think that he is so absorbed in God, that he minds not exterior things; but if, on the other hand, you perceive he takes care to keep it very neat and handsome, believe his interior is like his exterior.

The same Chronicles state also that St. Francis, going to preach in some parts of Italy, met in his way a poor man, who lay very sick ; and being touched with commiseration, he noticed him to his companion, with great signs of tenderness and compassion. Whereupon the good religious made answer:—" That in truth he appeared very poor, but, perhaps, he was as rich in desires as even the rich men of the world were." For this rash judgment St. Francis presently gave him a severe reprehension, and told him, that if he desired to remain with him, he must perform the penance he should impose upon him. The good brother submitting with great humility to what he should please to order, St. Francis commanded him to cast himself at the beggar's feet, to ask his pardon for the rash judgment he had made of him, and to beg that he would intercede by his prayers to God for him ; and the good religious presently obeyed the saint.

TWENTY-FIFTH DAY.

"Judge not, and you shall not be judged: condemn not, and you shall not be condemned."(a)—*Our Blessed Saviour.*

"O how displeasing to God is rash judgment! It is rash for the children of men to judge others, because they are not appointed judges over one another, and because to judge others is to usurp an office which of right belongs to our Lord alone. It is likewise rash, because the chief malice of sin depends on the intention and the counsel of the heart, and these are not yet manifested to us. And again, it is rash because every one has enough to do to judge himself, without undertaking to judge others."—*St. Francis of Sales.*

Amongst all the temptations that the enemy of our salvation provides himself with, in order to make war against us, one of the chief is that which incites us to judge ill of our brethren. For by judging ill of them, we lose first the good opinion, and secondly the affection we had for them; or at least our charity towards them abates and grows cold. Wherefore we must take all care imaginable vigorously to resist this temptation, which, as it annoys and weakens charity, we must believe to be extremely dangerous. If you will, therefore, preserve charity in your heart,—if you desire to keep yourself in a perfect union with your brethren, *Above all things*, says St. Austin, *take care you admit no suspicions into your mind, because they are the poison of friendship.* St. Bonaventure calls them *a secret plague, but a very dangerous one, because it drives God far from us, and tears in pieces fraternal charity.*

"*Who are you*," asks St. Paul, "*who take upon you to judge the servant of another?* It belongs only to his master to absolve or condemn him."(b)

(a) St. Luke vi. 37. (b) Rom. xiv. 4.

"Wherefore, take care of judging before the time, until our Lord comes Himself, who will illuminate even the thickest darkness, and discover the greatest secrets of hearts, and then every one shall receive praise from Him."(a) We read in the lives of the fathers, that a certain anchorite, having upon slight grounds judged ill of another, heard presently a voice from heaven, that said to him: "*Men usurp to themselves* that right of judicature *which I have reserved to myself, and encroach upon my jurisdiction.*"

St. Joseph, when he discovered, beyond all doubt, that the Blessed Virgin was with child, knowing her eminent sanctity and the angelic purity of her life, did not entertain the slightest suspicion against her, although appearances were so unfavourable, but, committing all judgment to God, thought of leaving her in the meantime privately. Now, the Spirit of God says of him in the Gospel, that he acted thus, because he was a just man. A just man, when he can excuse neither the act nor the intention of a neighbour of otherwise well known probity, will not judge him, but will try to banish the subject from his mind, and leave judgment to God. Our Blessed Saviour, when dying on the cross, not being able entirely to excuse the sin of those who crucified Him, endeavoured to extenuate its malice by alleging their ignorance. In like manner, when we cannot excuse another's sin, let us endeavour to render it deserving of our compassion, by attributing it to the most favourable cause, such as ignorance or frailty.

Surius relates, that St. Arsenius being sick, a priest of the neighbouring parish came to visit him,

(a) 1 Cor. iv. 5.

together with an ancient hermit, and finding him lying on a carpet, and his head resting upon a pillow, the hermit, who knew not what Arsenius had been in the world, was scandalized to see a man so famed for sanctity treat himself so tenderly, and with so much delicacy. The priest, who was a prudent man, perceived this very well, and taking him aside, "I pray, father, tell me," says he, "what kind of life you led before you embraced this of a hermit?" The old man having answered him, that being always very poor, his life was much the same as that he lived at present, "Know, then," replied the priest, "that Arsenius, before he came to the desert, was a man of high rank, very rich, and a great favourite of the emperor, to whom he had also been tutor. Consider, he has forsaken all these things to embrace poverty and humility, and judge, if in a man who had all his life been brought up in abundance and pleasures, and who at present is worn out with age and sickness, it is too great nicety and delicacy to have a pillow and carpet to lie upon." The hermit, who, with astonishment, had heard all that he said, presently conceived a very high esteem of the sanctity of Arsenius, and a very great confusion for the rash judgment he had made of him.

The abbot Anastasius, who flourished at the time of the sixth general council, relates that in the monastery of Mount Sina, where he was abbot, there was a certain religious, who so easily dispensed with himself in the spiritual exercises of the community, that he passed amongst them for none of the most exemplary and religious. He fell sick, and the abbot perceiving, that instead of being troubled at the approach of death, he, on

the contrary, expressed a very great joy, severely reprehended him, saying, he was astonished that he who had lived after so loose a manner, should have so great peace and tranquillity of mind, when he was upon the point of rendering an account of all his defects to God. "I pray, father, be not at all astonished," answered he; "our Lord has sent an angel to me, with an assurance of my salvation, and that He will keep His word, and the promise he Has given, when He said: *Judge not, and you shall not be judged; condemn not, and you shall not be condemned.* For, though it is very true that, either for want of health or out of tepidity, I have not exactly complied with the duties of the community, yet I have never failed patiently to suffer the ill-treatment I have received for it, and to pardon it with all my heart; and have been so far from judging ill of those who thus treated me, that I have always taken it in good part, and judged well of all their words and actions; and this is what at present gives me so much joy and comfort."

TWENTY-SIXTH DAY.

"Why seest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, and seest not the beam that is in thy own eye? Or, how sayest thou to thy brother, Let me cast the mote out of thy eye; and behold a beam is in thy own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thy own eye, and then shalt thou see to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye."(a)—*Our Blessed Saviour.*

"Those who attend to the regulation of their own consciences, are not much given to form rash judgments; far from wasting their reflection in dissecting the actions and intentions of their neighbours whose conduct may appear cloudy and obscure, they enter into themselves, and use their utmost endeavours to reform and perfect their own lives; like bees, which in misty and cloudy weather retire to their hives to pursue their home labours."
—*St. Francis of Sales.*

THERE is nothing so hateful and abominable in the sight of God as the hypocritical spirit of those who, whilst they are perfectly blind to their own faults, are quick sighted respecting the faults of others, exaggerating them in their own mind as well as speaking of them to others. The awful language employed by our meek and bountiful Saviour against the Pharisees in the Gospel, affords a striking and fearful proof of this truth. Hence it is that the saints had nothing more at heart than to guard themselves against this evil, by putting the best possible construction on the actions of others, and attending seriously to the discovery and correction of their own faults.

Amongst the various resolutions which the venerable Margaret Alacoque made in order to advance in the path of holiness, we find the following one: —"I will never inform myself of the faults of others; and when I am obliged to speak of them, I will do it in the charity of the Sacred Heart of

(a) Mat. vii. 3—5.

our Lord Jesus Christ. Considering whether I should be well pleased that they did or said the like of me; and when I see any fault committed, I will offer to the Eternal Father, in reparation, the contrary virtue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus."

St. Bonaventure gives us a beautiful rule, in order to practise charity wherever we perceive any fault in our neighbour. "When you perceive," says he, "anything worthy of reprehension, turn your eyes upon yourself; before you judge him, examine yourself well; and if you find that you are guilty of some fault, pronounce the sentence against yourself, and condemn that in yourself which you would have condemned in him, by saying with the Royal Prophet: *It is I who have sinned, it is I who have done evil.* I deserve not to kiss the ground he treads upon, and that which I perceive in him is nothing compared to what I find in myself." St. Bernard teaches us another means, which will aid us very much. "*When you perceive in your neighbour*," says he, "*anything that pleases you, see if you possess the same; and if you have it, think how to preserve it; but if you have it not, endeavour to acquire it;* and by this means you will make your profit in all things. A virtuous man looks upon all things and puts on them the best construction, though sometimes he perceives something to doubt of; and when indeed, a thing admits of two interpretations, it is bad to give it the more unfavourable one." St. Dorotheus says, that as a man who is of a good constitution, and has a good stomach, converts even those meats that are hard of digestion and unwholesome into good nourishment, and, on the contrary, a bad stomach turns even the best meats into bile and bad humours, so he who has

a good and upright heart interprets all things well; whereas he who knows not what virtue is, poisons all things, and interprets them in the worst sense.

The saints add, moreover, that though there is no sin in judging that an action is bad, when it is evidently so, yet should that which they see be manifestly culpable, it is still a virtue and perfection to endeavour, as far as in our power, to excuse our brother. *Excuse the intention, if you cannot excuse the action*, says St. Bernard; believe it proceeds from ignorance or surprise; that it happens by chance, or is an effect of the first motion, which he could not help and was not master of. If we loved our brethren as ourselves, and looked upon them as our second selves, as in effect they really are, we should not want reasons or address to excuse them.

But if the fault should be so evident and criminal, that you cannot excuse it, then, says St. Bernard, think thus with yourselves: If I had been set upon with the same temptation, and God had permitted the devil to have the same power to tempt me, what might not have happened to me? We read of St. Ignatius, that when any action was so evidently bad, that he found no way to excuse it, he suspended his judgment, and adhering fast to the Holy Scripture, he said, "*Take heed of judging before the time. There is none but God who sees the heart.* A servant cannot be absolved or condemned but by his master."

TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY.

"He that will love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil and his lips that they speak no guile. Let him decline from evil and do good. Let him seek after peace and pursue it." (a)—*The Apostle St. Peter.*

"Rash judgment produces detraction, which is the bane of conversation. Would that, with a burning coal from the holy altar, I might purify the lips of men from all such iniquity, as the seraph purified the lips of the prophet Isaias: for assuredly, were detraction banished from the world, numberless other sins would be banished together with it."—*St. Francis of Sales.*

St. Teresa confesses of herself, that even during the time that she led a very imperfect life, God gave her a particular horror of detraction. "I did not speak ill of any one," says she, "in the slightest degree, for my ordinary custom was to avoid all kind of detraction, since I remembered that I should never wish nor say anything of any one, which I did not wish should be said of me. This I paid particular attention to on all occasions, though yet not so perfectly on occasions which sometimes offered themselves, of breaking any rule; still it was my general practice. Those who were in my company, and who spoke to me, I so earnestly persuaded to adopt this custom, that it became natural to them. Hence it was understood, wherever I was, that all absent persons were secure; and this was also the case with those who were my friends and relations, or others whom I had instructed."

Although St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi felt great horror for all kinds of sins, yet against two faults she was particularly rigorous and implacable when mistress of novices, and infallibly imposed severe

(a) 1 Pet. iii. 10, 11.

penance on the offender. One was the use of the expressions "I will" or "I will not" by a novice; the other was detraction, though it related even to the smallest fault in another, and she always recommended them to speak little of their neighbours, even in commendation. "For," said she, "we begin by speaking good, and end by speaking evil of our neighbour." She reminded them, when speaking of others, to say nothing in their absence which they would not say in their presence; and said, that had she known a person who during her whole life had never spoken ill of her neighbour, she should have thought her worthy of canonization before death. When a novice had been guilty of detraction, however slight, she did not usually permit her to enter the oratory that evening till she had called her to give her a penance, which was usually this: she ordered her to acknowledge the fault in presence of all the novices, and then, if the fault were light, to make a cross on the ground with her tongue, but if it were more serious, she made her prostrate herself on the ground, and ordered all the others to tread on her mouth, or else to give it three strokes of the discipline. They had the same penance for saying "I will" and "I will not," so that every one was careful, and these vices might be said to be banished from the novitiate.

We read in the life of St. Ignatius that he never spoke of the faults of others, however notorious, and he wished others to do the same. If such faults were mentioned in his presence, he used to justify the intention, if not the act. And if ever this was manifestly impossible, he took refuge in the text of Scripture, saying, *Judge not before the time*, and *God seeth the heart*.

Would to God that, even in the cloister, there were not to be found religious whose tongues are so sharp that they cannot speak without wounding the character of a neighbour. Such persons should be banished from all monasteries ; or should, at least, be separated from the society of their brothers. For they disturb the recollection, silence, devotion, and peace of the whole community.

Be careful, dear brother, never to utter a word which savours of detraction ; be particularly careful to avoid all uncharitableness towards your companions in religion. But, above all, be on your guard against every expression which is, in the slightest degree, calculated to depress the character of your superiors. By speaking ill of them you may destroy, in your companions, the spirit of obedience, by diminishing their respect for their judgment and authority. Should your language excite a suspicion in the mind of your companions that the superior is unreasonable in his commands, it will be very difficult to induce them to practise the obedience which is due to him. The sin of detraction is committed, not only by imputing to others what is not true, by exaggerating their defects, or by making known their hidden faults, but also by representing their virtuous actions as defective, or by ascribing them to a bad motive. It is also detraction to deny the good works of others, or to question their claims to the just praises bestowed upon them.

Let it be your care always to speak well of all. Speak of others as you would wish to be spoken of by others. With regard to the absent, observe the excellent rule of St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi: "Never to utter in their absence what you would not say in their presence." And should you

ever hear a companion speak ill of others, be careful never to encourage his uncharitableness, nor to appear pleased with his language, otherwise you shall partake of his guilt. You should either reprove him, or change the subject of conversation, or withdraw from him, or, at least, pay no attention to him. "Hedge in thy ears with thorns," says the Holy Ghost; "hear not a wicked tongue." Against detraction hedge in your ears with thorns, that it may not enter. Whenever, then, you hear a person speak ill of others, it is necessary to show, at least by silence, by a grave countenance, or by downcast eyes, that you are not pleased with the conversation. Conduct yourself always in such a way, that no one may, in future, dare to attack the character of another in your presence.

TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY.

"I will love all my brethren, but be particularly attached to no one; private friendships are dangerous to a community; when once they glide in, charity is weakened, and good order is reversed. Thanks to our Lord, my heart is free; and as it is tied to nothing, so likewise it is attached to no person. I love nothing, but in Thee, and for Thee, O my God! and if I knew that any other love existed in my heart, I should consider it a profane flame, capable of extinguishing the sacred fire of Thy holy love."—*Venerable Berchmans.*

Nothing seemed to this most innocent youth more likely to weaken the pure flame of holy love than particular friendships. He detested them from his inmost soul, and condemned them in his conversations with his brethren whenever he had the opportunity. "Let us love one another," would he say to them, with his usual sweetness and fervour, "but let us love one another in Jesus Christ, with an equal and universal love. We all serve the same Master; we are all children of the same order; consequently we should all be of one heart; that friendship which is bestowed upon one individual is a theft upon all the rest; nature is the source of such a distinction, and so bad a cause can never produce good effects." His own fixed resolution was to love all, but to be particularly familiar with none; to encourage himself to fidelity on this point, he had collected in writing the opinions of the most skilful masters.

St. Basil, in his monastic constitutions, says, there ought to be a very great union amongst religious, but all sorts of particular ties or friendships between two or three persons only must be retrenched; for how holy soever these ties may appear, nevertheless this strict union with one

particular person is a formal disunion from the rest. He takes notice of this, yet more precisely, in his first sermon on the institution of monks, where, descending more to particulars, he says, *If any one be found, who, upon any account whatsoever, either of kindred or anything else, seems to have a greater tie or affection to one religious than to another, he must be admonished, as one who does an injury to common charity.* He adds the reason also, in the same place, and still more expressly in the following sermon, where he explains the injury we do in this to a religious community :—"*Whoever*," says he, "*loves one of his brothers better than another, shows by this alone that he does not perfectly love the rest ; and consequently offends others, and injures the whole community.* But if God feels so sensibly an offence given to an individual, that He says, whosoever touches him, touches the apple of His eye, how displeased will He be at an offence given to a whole community ?" Wherefore, the same saint expressly forbids all his religious to have any particular tie, affection, or familiarity, more with one than another, through fear of giving any one the least offence, and desires, that in imitation of the goodness of God, who makes the sun to shine as well upon the good as the bad, and makes it rain upon the just and unjust, we should have an equal charity for all our brethren. He adds, that these particular friendships in religion are an everlasting seed of envy, suspicions, distrusts and enmities; and give occasion of divisions, cabals, and secret assemblies, which are the destruction and ruin of religion. For in them one discovers his particular designs, and another speaks of the judgments he has made ; a third

opens the subjects of his complaints; and a fourth reveals those secrets he should not speak of. In these cabals also they murmur, speak ill of one another, betray all sorts of defects, and spare not even the superior himself; and, by a most unhappy contagion, they presently communicate all that is bad one to another. In fine, by means of these friendships rules are often violated, and to follow the inclinations of friends, many things are done contrary to duty and profession.

We read in the Chronicles of the order of St. Francis, that a holy religious, named brother John, very carefully avoided all sorts of conversations and particular friendships; and that another religious, who had a great esteem and affection for him, and had profited very much by his conversation, complaining one day to him of his manner of proceeding, asked him why he was so reserved towards his friends. "It is for your good I do so," answered the servant of God, "for thereby I shall be more useful to those who also desire my good; for all particular friendships are so many amusements, that serve only to divert me from God, and consequently do harm to us both."

TWENTY-NINTH DAY.

"Charity is patient, is kind; charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely, is not puffed up." (a)—*The Apostle St. Paul.*

This great Apostle thus describes the many and grievous troubles which he endured for charity's sake. "Thrice was I beaten with rods, once I was stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I was in the depth of the sea. In journeying often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils from my own nation, in perils from the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils from false brethren. In labour and painfulness, in much watchings, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Besides those things which are without my daily instance, the solicitude for all the churches."(b)

The same spirit of suffering for charity's sake animated the blessed Leonard, whose life was one continued exercise of charity and incessant toil in converting souls to God; and He alone knows the numbers which, by means of his preaching, admonishing, and confessing, he drew from the depths of sin and the road to hell, to paradise.

Sometimes when he was weak and exhausted, and his companions entreated him to put off preaching for some days, he replied, with admirable zeal, "A soldier would feel ashamed to put down his sword when he has received a wound, but would even fight with greater courage." In confirmation of this, a short time before his death he thus wrote to a religious in Rome: "I am old and my days

(a) 1 Cor. xiii. 4. (b) 2 Cor. xi. 25—28.

on earth cannot be many more, but I desire to die with my sword in my hand, fighting against sin and hell, delivering souls out of the power of the devil, and restoring them to God." In short, it may be said of him and of his zeal for saving souls: *Aquæ multæ non potuerunt extinguere charitatem.*

Yet blessed Leonard, besides being extremely patient, was very remarkable for the kindness which he showed to others, especially in his conduct towards his brethren in religion. For although towards himself he was most rigid and austere, he was with them most indulgent, mild, and benignant, full of compassion for every one, and rejoiced when all were provided for according to their state and profession. When he was guardian, he desired that all that was necessary in the way of food should be prepared for the community, but always used to partake of it himself very sparingly, saying that he was healthy and robust, and could abstain. The same charity induced him to moderate the rigour of the fasts which they kept during the missions, and because his companions were very often sick from exhaustion, he allowed all of them to eat as much as was necessary, whilst he took nothing more during the day than a cup of water mixed with barley and wormwood, although he had gone through the greatest fatigue. So also in his journeys he walked barefoot, but desired his companions to wear sandals; his feet were often bleeding from the rough roads and intense cold.

We also read of the venerable Father Joseph Anchieta that he was especially conspicuous for his kind and patient charity. Although he was habitually silent and recollected in God, yet there was

nothing of a repulsive austerity in his recollection, retirement and silence; he was cordial and cheerful in his intercourse with his companions at the hours appointed for recreation; and if spoken to at a time of silence, he would answer, as briefly as possible it is true, but always with kindness and civility, being convinced that exactitude and devotion without charity are chimerical, and that no one can truly love either God, or his rule, unless he love his neighbour for God, and proposes to himself this grand motive of charity as the first and chief of all his rules. Nothing was dearer to his heart than this important virtue; and to perfect himself in it, and to be continually on the watch against everything which in the least degree might impair its lustre, he made it the subject of his examen.

It is related of St. Ignatius that he made use of the great natural sagacity which he had, for gaining the hearts of men and bringing them to Christ. He cultivated the friendship of the great as opportunities presented themselves; his equals he attracted by the sweetness of his manners; and the poor he bound to him by the assistance his authority and his alms afforded them, though he himself was poor; the sick he made his friends by visiting them at the peril of his own health and life, and by comforting them with all his power. He bore with all the pride and natural imperfections of those with whom he lived, and passed over offensive words and actions with a wonderful dissimulation. He discovered the inclinations of all, and accommodated himself to them as far as he lawfully could. In a word, as the Apostle expresses it, he made himself all things to all men. When he had thoroughly entered into their minds,

and had gained an influence over them, he went on, prudently guiding them step by step in the practice of virtue.

This saint was used to say, that the minister of Christ ought, like the Apostle, to be all things to all men, to gain all to Christ, and for love of Christ he ought to live to his brethren and not to himself; he should accommodate himself to their affairs, and not their affairs to him: for those pastors will never succeed who look to their own convenience instead of watching for the opportunities which are offered to them.

THIRTIETH DAY.

"Charity is not ambitious, seeketh not her own, is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth with the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." (a)—*The Apostle St. Paul.*

It is recorded in Holy Scripture, that although Moses burnt with love for his brethren, who were groaning under the Egyptian slavery when he was chosen and called by God to be the chief and deliverer of His people, he was yet impressed with such an humble sentiment of his unworthiness, that he entreated Almighty God to dispense with his services, and to send another more capable than himself. This spirit of humble and disinterested charity, which was so conspicuous in Moses, is common to all the saints, who, far from aspiring to any high station, or longing after honours, or in-

(a) 1 Cor. xiii. 5, 6.

dulging any ambitious view in the exercise of charity, have always trampled under foot all human glory, and wished only to be clad with the reproach and ignominy of the cross of Christ.

A great sign of the humble and disinterested charity of the saints was, that they sincerely rejoiced at the good done by others in the practice of charity, no less than if it had been effected by themselves. Thus we read in Holy Scripture(a) that the seventy elders, who were chosen by Moses to share with him the government of the people, received an infusion of the Spirit of God, and began prophesying and speaking loudly of His mysteries. This was reported to Moses, and Joshua said to him, "My lord, let not these people prophesy, they are not fit for it." But Moses replied, "Would to God that all the people might prophesy, and that to all was communicated His Spirit." A similar thing happened to St. Paul. His faith and constancy in suffering during his imprisonment at Rome for the sake of the Gospel had contributed to increase his followers even in the court of the emperor; and some amongst the brethren had the courage to preach Jesus Christ there, urged on by good zeal and charity. Others, also, who looked with envious eyes on the glory of St. Paul, took on themselves to preach the Gospel only to increase the weight of his chains; but what did the great Apostle say to them? "In whatever way it happens," he wrote to the Phillipians, "whether for the sake of truth or by occasion, Christ is preached, in this also I rejoice; yea, and will rejoice."(b)

And as the saints exhibited great humility in their charity, so they also evinced great tenderness of

(a) Numb. xi. (b) Phil. i. 18.

heart, united with much wisdom and constancy of purpose. It is related in the life of the venerable Father Pinamonti, that he used to receive all penitents with an indescribable affability and mildness, embracing them with all the tenderness of an affectionate parent. Every one who came to him he received with the same delight and kindness as if he had been the first or only one to cast himself at his feet, and relieve his conscience of the insupportable weight of his sins. There was no poor creature buried in ignorance, or of the most uncouth manners, no peasant or needy labourer, no one immersed in vice, who did not see himself received with the utmost readiness, listened to with the most unwearied patience, and in the end relieved with the most unaffected tenderness. He cured the wounds and the sores of his penitents with sweetness, tempering, like the good Samaritan in the Gospel, the smart of the wine with the soothing properties of the oil. And so great was the benignity with which he treated those lost souls, that there was no one who did not go away ashamed of himself, and enchanted with such amiable charity.

No criminal ever found himself buried in iniquity, that, when he approached the confessional, the good father did not receive with an angelic sweetness of countenance, and press to his heart as if he had been the prodigal son; thereby showing a perfect resemblance to that father in the Gospel, who, on recovering his lost child, took no notice of his coming all sordid and unclean, but considered merely that he was his own son. He compassionated the miseries of others as though they had been his own. And God knows that he would never show the least sign of disgust or in-

dignation at the innumerable hideous enormities which so frequently resounded in his ear. The pains which he suffered in his head were almost continual, yet charity, which ruled as the mistress over all other affections, made him, as it were, insensible to his own sufferings, that he might relieve those of others. With a joyful and serene countenance, joined with the most affectionate manners, he was always ready to assist any one who was willing to have recourse to him. No one oppressed with sadness, after applying to the charity of the father, ever left him without being relieved and content; there was no conscience agitated by scruples, or molested by the enemy of souls, for which he was not by his soothing advice an angel of peace, nor did ever a sick or miserable creature fail to derive immediate succour from his hands.

He made no distinction whatever between nobles and common people, learned and ignorant, seeing the image of God impressed in the soul of each, and therein deposited the infinite treasures of the merits of Christ.

THIRTY-FIRST DAY.

"Give and it shall be given to you, good measure and pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall they give into your bosom. For with the same measure that you shall mete withal, it shall be measured to you again." (a)

"He that receives a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive the reward of a prophet; and he that shall receive a just man in the name of a just man, shall receive the reward of a just man. And whosoever shall give to drink to one of these little ones a cup of cold water, only in the name of a disciple, amen I say to you, he shall not lose his reward."(b)—*Our Blessed Saviour.*

THESE words of our Blessed Saviour possess a wonderful power to urge His disciples to the practice of charity. When we have an intimate friend, whom we desire to recommend extremely to another, our ordinary expression is, *By the love you show to him, you will express your love to me.* In the same manner, says St. Chrysostom, when our Saviour said, the second commandment was like the first, He would have us to understand, that if we love our neighbour, we love God Himself, and it is in this sense that He said to St. Peter, *If you love Me, feed My sheep*,—as if He would say, If you love Me take care of Mine, and thus I shall know whether it is true, or not, that you really and effectually love Me.

Certainly this ought to be a powerful motive to excite us to love our brethen, and to do them all the good we can; because, though it seems to us that we do it to persons to whom we owe nothing, yet if we look upon God, and reflect upon the infinite obligations we have to Him, and consider that He has transferred all His right to them, we shall find that we are indebted to them for all we have. Father Avila, therefore, speaking on this

(a) St. Luke vi. 38. (b) St. Matt. x. 41, 42.

subject, says, when the carnal man that is within you shall ask you, "What great obligations have I to such a one, to move me so far as to do him any favour? And how can I be able to love him, since he has so much injured me?" Answer him, that perhaps you should give ear to what he says against your neighbour, if your neighbour were the only motive, object, or cause of this your love; but that Jesus Christ Himself is the cause and object thereof, and it is He Himself who receives the good you do to your neighbour, and who looks upon the pardon you bestow upon your neighbour as if it were a favour and a pardon you bestowed upon Himself; and thus whosoever your neighbour is, and whatsoever injury he can have done you, yet there is nothing that ought to cool your charity towards him, or hinder its effects, since it is not him, but Jesus Christ, you ought to consider in all your thoughts and actions.

We read of the venerable Father Pinamonti, that his love in assisting the needy was as great as if all had been his brothers, or to speak more correctly, as if he had been relieving the Son of God Himself, who presented Himself to him clothed in the garb of a beggar. Thus recognising in the poor the person of Christ, he went himself in search of the poor, as if he were going to receive an alms, and not to confer one. He never appeared so delighted, and in such high spirits, as when an opportunity offered itself to do good to his poor. He would often, when journeying onwards, retire to refresh himself near to some fountain, or within the shade of the woods; and whenever he saw at a distance any poor man, he would immediately rise, and run to present to him a portion of his frugal fare, for indeed he felt a

stronger desire to feed the hungry than they themselves to be fed. The same happened when he was in the public hotels; no sooner did any mendicants appear, than he rose from table and afforded them succour. His companions could find no better way of pleasing him than to collect on a dish a portion of their food, and present it to Father Pinamonti for his poor; and the delight which he experienced in these holy occupations was beyond description.

No less wonderful was the charity which St. Joseph Calasanctius displayed for his neighbour in time of need. In the summer of 1595 Rome was devastated by an infectious disease, so malignant as not to be distinguished from the plague; death reaped a rich harvest of human lives; few were the houses that did not either pay him tribute or prepare to do so; the whole city was overwhelmed with terror, desolation, and misery, and especially the poor, for as the hospitals were soon completely filled, they were unprovided with remedies or other succours. This public calamity excited the heart of Joseph to deep compassion; whilst he devoted both mind and body to labour. He immediately sacrificed all the delights of peaceful contemplation; all but renounced both sleep and food, barely allowing himself sufficient to prevent starvation and enable him to persevere in active charity. From the hospitals he passed to the houses of the poor, and to the huts and stables where poor miserable objects were crowded in sad confusion, abandoned to their sufferings. With the assistance of a ladder the man of God was to be seen climbing in at the windows, when, as but too often happened, there was no person within sufficiently in health to crawl and open the door. He conveyed restoratives to them all, being accom-

panied for this purpose by a serving man, and a hired horse, well laden with all necessaries; he performed the most menial and repulsive offices for these poor creatures; administered the sacraments to those who were in danger, assisted the agonizing, prayed for the dead, and buried their bodies. Certainly it was owing to no precaution on his part, but to the goodness of God alone, that he escaped this fearful contagion, to which his charity so incessantly exposed him.

Towards the end of the year 1598 the Tiber overflowed its banks most alarmingly, and occasioned a terrible inundation in and around Rome; the waters covered a considerable part of the city, rushing onwards with such impetuosity as to shake and injure many of the houses, whilst some were completely overturned and swallowed up together with their inmates.

The efforts and anxiety of Joseph were not spared on this melancholy occasion; the governor of the city did his duty nobly, but the charity of the former was more active, as the motive which gave it birth was more elevated. He courageously plunged into the waters, wading through them with much fatigue and danger, and as he was very tall, he was able to rescue many drowning creatures, to drag out the dead bodies, to secure for them the benefit of Christian burial, or to open a passage and give vent to the stagnant water; at other times he procured a boat, and allowing himself no respite, went backwards and forwards to convey provisions to those who were so cruelly imprisoned, and delivered those who were the least secure, though at his own great risk; everywhere was he to be seen at work; he seemed to be unwearied and unweariable.

FEBRUARY.

HUMILITY.

"Every one that humbleth himself shall be exalted."—*Luke* xviii. 14.

FIRST DAY.

"'Take up my yoke and learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart."[a]—*Our Divine Saviour.*

"The whole life of Christ upon earth was a continual lesson of morality, but He in a special manner proposed to us His humiliation for our imitation."—*St. Austin.*

St. Basil takes a view of the whole life of our Saviour, and after having examined the chief circumstances thereof, from His birth to His death, shows, that all His actions teach us particularly the virtue of humility. His will was to be circumcised as a sinner; to fly into Egypt as too weak and unable to resist; and to be baptized with sinners and publicans, as one of them. When the people wish to honour and make Him king, He hides Himself; when they wish to cover Him with reproaches, He shows Himself. Men praise Him, and even the devils themselves do so by the mouths of the possessed, and He commands their silence. They load Him with outrage and injury, and He answers not a word. After all this, to recommend humility to us, as it were, by His

[a] Matt. xi. 29.

last will and testament, at the close of life He stoops so low as to wash His disciples' feet; and, in fine, He crowns so many examples by the most shameful death of the cross. He wished to annihilate Himself, says Saint Bernard, to show first by His example, what he was afterwards to teach by His words. St. Austin, explaining the aforesaid words of our Saviour, cries out: "O wholesome doctrine! O Master and Lord of men, who hast swallowed death in a cupful of the poison of pride, and what wouldst Thou have us learn of Thee?—*That I am meek and humble of heart.* What! are all the treasures of the wisdom and knowledge which are lodged in Thee, reduced to this? Is it so great a thing to be little, that nobody can teach it to us except Thou, who art so great, takest care thereof? Yea," adds the saint, "so great and difficult a thing it is to humble and make one's self little, that men could not have arrived thereto if the great God Himself had not set them the example. He says not," continues St. Austin, "learn of me to make heaven and earth, to create all visible things, to work miracles, to raise the dead; but learn of me to be meek and humble of heart: for solid humility," as the same saint adds, "is much more powerful and safe than empty grandeur. It is better to be humble and serve God with fear, than to work miracles. The first is an even and sure way; the other a very difficult and dangerous one."

This great and holy doctor, who by his teaching, as well as by his exalted sanctity, adorned and edified the whole Church, had nothing more at heart from the time of his conversion than to imitate his Divine Master in the practice of sincere

and perfect humility. Out of love for this virtue he wrote his confessions, or praises of the Divine mercy and goodness, about the year 397, not long after he was made bishop, when all the world admired his sanctity, and he enjoyed the greatest honour and fame. Possidius assures us, that his main design in composing this work was to study his own humiliation, and to endeavour that no one should think of him above that which he confessed himself to be. He therefore divulged all the sins of his youth in the nine first books, and, in the tenth, published the many imperfections to which he was still subject, humbly begging the intercession of all Christians in his behalf. The saint himself, sending this book to Count Darius, tells him, that "The caresses of this world are more dangerous than its persecutions. See what I am from this book; believe me who bear testimony of myself, and regard not what others say of me. Praise with me the goodness of God for the great mercy He hath shown in me, and pray for me, that He will be pleased to finish what He hath begun in me, and that He will never suffer me to destroy myself."

For the same motive of copying our Blessed Lord in His humility, St. Jane Frances of Chantal took every occasion by which she might lower and debase herself. During her visit to the Princess de Cantecroix, the latter prepared some carpet stools for the saint to kneel upon during Mass; but she would not use them, saying, "Do not oblige me to use this stool; I shall not feel at ease; a religious has always her stool at hand, namely, the earth, which was the stool used by our Lord, when He prayed in the garden of Olives, and when He spent the night in prayer on the mountain."

This saint, when in her seventieth year, animated by the spirit of humility, took the lowest rank with a lay sister; which place she loved with such holy jealousy, that she could not be prevailed to take any other; when spoken to about it, she only expressed her great regret that any attention should be paid to such things, expressing her astonishment at their imagining that the lowest place was any humiliation; and when the mother superioress desired to hinder her from telling her faults, and kneeling down to receive the corrections of the community, the saint humbly entreated her not to deprive her of so great satisfaction and pleasure; saying, that in the kingdom of heaven the "last shall be first;" that Jesus Christ, the Maker of the world and Founder of the Church, made Himself the last of all men, and that before going to His Passion, He threw Himself at the feet of all His disciples.

We read of the venerable Labré, that in order to imitate our Blessed Saviour in His practice of humility, his chief study during life was to lower and debase himself ever more and more, putting himself beneath the feet of all. He called himself "a most unworthy sinner, undeserving to lift up his eyes to Heaven; a son of wrath, a son of vengeance and of anger, a vessel of malice;" and more frequently, "a monster of ingratitude, a most vile and abominable creature, the greatest sinner in the world." To some persons who made known to him that they wished to see him when he was at Loretto, he replied, "What curiosity! Do they wish to see a wolf? I am a wolf." As he spoke, so he acted. First, he took on all occasions the last place, according to the advice of our Blessed Redeemer: "Sit down in the lowest

place." (Luke xiv. 10.) In fact, he used to place himself last in the crowd of penitents when he was going to confession; the last in the company of other people, considering himself the vilest; the last at the doors of the convents to receive the charity of soup, usually distributed to the poor about mid-day. His being the last gained him sometimes reproofs from the porter, who was very sorry to see him, through his own virtuous conduct, occasionally deprived of his portion; but Benedict, silently bearing the rebuke, went away equally satisfied with the loss of his soup and the additional reprimand. A person who esteemed Benedict, passing about mid-day by the monastery dell' Umiltà, saw a great crowd of poor people pressing round the distributor of soup, and seeing Benedict standing devoutly, leaning against the opposite wall, without any solicitude about going nearer, he thought it advisable to recommend him to do so, "Otherwise," said he, "you will go without;" but he went away quietly, as if he had received a portion. Secondly, he fled honours and the esteem of men, with great horror. Benedict had a greater aversion for these than worldlings have for insults and contempt, which were alone desired by him. The example of the Son of God, Who was so greatly insulted in His passion, on which Benedict often meditated, and which was made clear to him by supernatural lights, had so profoundly moved his heart that it continually encouraged him to imitate it.

A lady, who had a great opinion of his sanctity, meeting him one day, ordered her little son to kiss his hand. Scarcely had Benedict heard these words, than, filled with horror, he retreated to a little distance, and hiding his hand within the

sleeves of his ragged cloak, he said, as if alarmed, "My hand!" and as she insisted and entreated him to allow it, and the little boy drew near him, he concealed his hands more carefully, and repeated, "Kiss my hand! my hand!" and causing her to desist, he went away quickly.

Another person, seeing his modesty and recollection after receiving the benediction of the most Blessed Sacrament in the church of Santa Maria dei Monti, approaching him, said, "How happy you are, who are so good! recommend me to our Lord." This sufficed; he seemed like one struck by a thunderbolt; his face became sad, he bent his head down more than usual, and turning his back upon her, quickly disappeared from her sight, so completely overwhelmed, that her companions repeatedly reproved her for having so much afflicted him.

SECOND DAY.

"Unless you be converted and become like little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." (a)—*Our Blessed Saviour.*

"The gate of heaven is straight, and none can enter it but those who are humble and little in their own eyes."—*St. Bernard.*

THERE is, perhaps, no truth in the whole Gospel which is more calculated to make a strong impression on the heart of every true Christian than this. The saints bore it continually before their mind, and studied with all their might to conform their life to it by waging a continual war against self-love, and striving to become simple and humble like little children.

The Archbishop of Paris once called St. Vincent of Paul to a great assembly held in his palace, and reprimanded him rather harshly on the subject of a mission which he thought Vincent had neglected: the latter, after the example of the Royal Prophet, said not a word to justify himself; and although he was then more than fifty years old, he went on his knees like a young novice before the master, and he begged his pardon for a fault of which he was not guilty. This conduct, which at first created surprise, did not fail to give great edification; but there was much more cause for admiration when it was known that he had performed, and well performed, the mission which the prelate had accused him of having neglected.

Father John de Verger, Abbot of St. Cyran, who was infected with some Jansenistical errors, having lost his patience after a long conversation

(a) St. Matt. xviii. 3.

with this saint, in which he rejected them with great strength and firmness, observed, in an angry tone: "You understand nothing but high Dutch, you are an ignorant man; far from being at the head of your congregation, you should be expelled from it, and I am surprised that they suffer you in it." "I am more surprised at it than you, sir," replied the man of God; "and I know well that if justice were done me, they would not fail to dismiss me."

We read that the venerable Benedict Labré debased himself in every way possible, and employed all his diligence in keeping his virtues and supernatural gifts hidden from the eyes of men.

When he was obliged by obedience to draw aside the veil of humility with which he desired to cover his solid virtues, one of his confessors attests, "that it was a continual martyrdom to Benedict, and a constant exercise of profound humility, to manifest those sentiments and those actions which he concealed from every one else with great care." That it was a martyrdom appeared by the deep sighs which from time to time escaped him; from the few and broken words which he uttered, like a person who was much grieved; and by the sadness which showed itself in his confused and blushing countenance.

With the same diligence he sought to hide the respectability of his condition, for which reason he always went about covered with vile rags; he never spoke of his relations, of the comfort he might have enjoyed at home, nor even let a word escape his lips which could in any way redound to his honour. All his care and industry were exerted to conceal himself and his virtuous actions from the

eyes of the world. He loved to appear as a vile object and wretched person.

Once, an exemplary priest, having succeeded in drawing him into his house to give him something necessary, went on to interrogate him, as to what nation he belonged, and why he had come into that part of the country. Benedict, always intent on concealing himself, answered, that he was a Frenchman and a vagrant. The priest did not believe him to be a vagrant, for he saw under those rags, with his quick eye, the virtues which they concealed, and he had heard mention made of various actions of Benedict, which had been observed elsewhere. The priest entered no farther into the subject at this time, but having formed a high idea of his sanctity, suddenly cast himself at his feet to kiss them. Benedict being thus taken by surprise, great confusion and horror appeared in his countenance, which he also showed in his tearful eyes and anxiety to go away; but the pious priest tranquillized him, by telling him that he had not done it out of respect to him, but to the Person of Jesus Christ, whom the poor represent. The same thing occurred again, when he surprised him by kissing his hand suddenly.

THIRD DAY.

"Every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." (a)—*Our Blessed Saviour.*

"Do you wish to be great? Begin by being little. Do you intend to erect a stately edifice? First resolve to make humility the foundation, and forget not, that the higher and more substantial the building is to be, so must the foundation be proportionably deeper."—*St. Austin.*

St. Simon Stylits, when young, retired to a solitary place, where there was a church of the martyrs; and there, prostrate upon the ground, with the utmost fervour of soul, besought Him, who desires that all men should be saved, to vouchsafe to direct him in the way of perfect piety, in order to secure his eternal salvation. Having continued a long time in prayer, he fell into a profound sleep, in which he had the following vision. He seemed to himself, as he related to Theoderet, to be digging the ground, in order to lay the foundation for a building, and he heard a voice which bid him *dig still deeper.* He did so, and then would have rested himself, but the voice a second time bid him *go deeper still.* And the same thing having been repeated four times, one after another, at length it was said to him, *that it was deep enough,* and that he had now nothing more to do but to build.

It was the deep foundation of humility which enabled St. Austin to attain to the summit of sanctity, according to the maxim which he laid down: "Attempt not to attain true wisdom by any other way than that which God hath enjoined. This is in the first, second, and third place,

(a) St. Luke xviii. 14.

humility ; and this would I answer as often as you ask me. Not that there are not other precepts ; but unless humility go before, accompany, and follow after, all that we do well is snatched out of our hands by pride. As Demosthenes, the prince of orators, being asked which among the precepts of eloquence was to be observed first, is said to have answered : Pronunciation, or the delivery. Again, which second ? Pronunciation. Which third ? Nothing else (said he) but pronunciation ; so if you should ask me concerning the precepts of the Christian religion, I should answer you, Nothing but humility. Our Lord Jesus Christ was made so low in order to teach us this humility, which a certain most ignorant science opposeth." Penetrated by the above named truth, that a deep foundation of humility is absolutely necessary in order to raise upon it the edifice of perfection, St. Ignatius of Loyola applied himself with great fervour to the practice of this virtue, from the time of his conversion to the end of his life. Not only was he careful never to drop a word which might give the least hint of his condition in life, but, when associating with the mendicants, he endeavoured, with great art, to imitate their manners, so that any body would have thought that he really was, by habit and by birth, what he now pretended to be. And as in former times he had been extremely fond of adorning his person, and among other things used to wear his long hair according to the fashion of the times, which was very beautiful and exquisitely curled and attended to, he would neither comb nor cut it, but suffered it to lie in confusion on his shoulders. He waited on the sick in the hospitals, and the most offensive of them were the most beloved by him, and the

more disgusting were the services they required the more contented he appeared. He went begging about the city, seeking rather for contempt than for bread, and he found what he desired, for the children especially used to cry out after him as he went about, "Look at that man in sackcloth," and followed him in troops, contending with each other with their jests and mockeries.

This holy founder having once appeared to St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi, thus spoke to her: "Humility ought to be infused," says he, "into a soul newly planted in religion, like oil into a lamp; and as the oil fills the whole vessel into which it is poured, so ought humility and true self-knowledge to occupy all the powers of the soul, that neither on the right nor on the left anything can be discerned except humility and meekness. As the wick cannot burn without oil, so neither can a novice in religion shine in holiness and perfection if he be not often admonished to be humble, and tried and exercised in this virtue, and shown how necessary it is for a true religious. This virtue is nothing more than an intimate knowledge of your own nothingness, and a sincere rejoicing in everything which may conduce to self contempt, which is very useful for one newly planted in religion, and assists very much in regulating all the powers of the soul. But it is your duty to take care that the novices continue firm and steadfast in the humiliations which they undergo, and be reminded that they took the habit of religion for this very end. And that the devil may not mix himself up in these practices, he who is their nurse ought to make use of a holy skill, viz., when he desires to humble either their judgment or their will, and they resist and become impatient, he

ought to rebuke them severely, and magnify their fault, even though it be but a little matter; and whilst pouring in the oil of humiliation, he ought to offer them a sweet balsam, pointing out to them how they do honour to God by such actions, the great benefit they derive from them, and the great work they perform; so that they may be brought to love humility, to desire it, and aspire after it alone. Humility ought to shine forth externally in all their words, acts, and works, and every word which does not savour of humility ought to be avoided as the blasphemies of the world; every act which is opposed to humility ought to be shunned in religion as dishonourable, as acts against fair fame are shunned in the world. All works which are not done in humility ought to be viewed with horror, just as a king would be horrified at seeing his son dressed in the garments of a swineherd."

FOURTH DAY.

"Gold and silver are tried in the fire, but acceptable men in the fire of humiliation."(a)—*The Wise Man.*

"True merit is known like true balm. Balm is tried by being distilled into water; if it sink to the bottom, it is esteemed valuable and precious; but it is of the contrary description, if it remain on the surface. Thus, to know if a man be really estimable, learned, noble, generous, we must ascertain if these advantages be built on humility and modesty; in that case, they will be truly valuable; but if they rise to the surface, and are ostentatiously exposed to public view, they may be accounted deceitful advantages, in the same proportion in which they are shown. Even virtues themselves, and the fairest qualities which adorn human nature, should they be fostered in pride and vanity, are but a vain appearance; they are really destitute of health and solidity."—*St. Francis of Sales.*

We read of the venerable Mother Margaret Alacoque that amidst the many and distinguished supernatural favours with which she was blessed by God, she possessed a spirit of the most sincere and deep humility; although greatly advanced in the path of holiness, yet she thought that she had always some fault to expiate, either for herself or for others; she believed herself responsible to God, not only for the faults which she committed, but for those to which she gave occasion. She always allowed herself to be in the wrong, and immediately asked for a penance for the expiation of the sin which she thus took upon herself. The superiors under whom she lived, and who were all of great virtue and singular prudence, also furnished her with continual opportunities of suffering, and of proving the inexhaustible depths of patience and humility within her. They generally began by being prejudiced against the ex-

(a) Eccles. ii. 5.

traordinary ways by which God conducted her, for which reason they neither spared her in reprimands, reproaches, nor corrections. The humble and patient sister bore all with an equal peace and contentment of mind ; far from becoming weary of her trials and of this severe treatment, she incessantly urged her superiors to humble and mortify her, and to spare her in nothing. Instead of murmuring, which so naturally arises in the heart when we are corrected with severity by our superiors, she felt only a sincere tenderness for hers, and a heartfelt gratitude that she was treated according to her wish. It was this which attached her so strongly to Mother de Saumaise ; the corrections which that wise superior so often bestowed upon her, served only to increase sister Margaret's confidence in her, which she preserved during her whole life ; often consulting her by letter, when this virtuous mother was called to other convents. Mother Greffier, who succeeded Mother de Saumaise in the superiority, increased her trials. She took every occasion of humbling and mortifying sister Margaret ; she designedly interrupted her devotions ; she blamed her conduct often and publicly ; and commonly, whilst refusing the penances she requested, she imposed others more humiliating and severe. Yet sister Margaret was not only docile, but what was more admirable, her love and confidence towards her superior was increased in proportion to her severity. She went to her with the same freedom and frankness as if caressed and won by engaging manners. If sister Margaret found gentle and charitable officers, she also met with those who were severe and sharp, and of that touchy disposition which can feel no sympathy with others. They abused her ready

willingness, and took advantage of her humility to reproach her ; they insulted her simplicity, and sometimes even severely criticised her conduct and scrupulous exactness in the smallest observances. All endeavoured to avoid being under officers of this character, and used every effort not to be associated with them, and sister Margaret, who never refused any humiliation, generally found herself destined, by obedience and the will of the superior, to be under those officers whose temper and dominion no one was willing to encounter. The first employment given her was that of assistant in the infirmary.

The infirmarian, who was of a quick and ardent temper, could not accommodate herself to the calm and phlegmatic manner of sister Margaret, which she made a continual subject of reproof. She became an austere critic of her devotions, her recollection, and her assiduous prayers, and this new Martha, as hurried and eager as that of the Evangelist, ceased not to blame the tranquillity and peace of Mary. She believed she did everything, and her assistant nothing, and complained that what she did was either badly done, or done too slowly. When sister Margaret wished to go to the church, the infirmarian was pleased to detain her, giving her some occupation. When she thought she had accomplished her task, the infirmarian made her do it over again, adding reprimands for her ignorance and want of skilfulness. It was impossible to do anything to her satisfaction ; it was either badly done, or done unskilfully, or not soon enough. With such a mistress it would have been much to suffer in silence, to obey with simplicity, and not to be disheartened ; but sister Margaret did not thus limit her practice of

patience; she entered fully into her superior's way of thinking, and really considered herself unskilful and idle, believing herself highly favoured in not receiving worse treatment.

A similar spirit was displayed by St. Philip, who might justly be called the lover of contempt and humiliation. All Rome regarded him as a saint; he was beloved not only by the middle and lower classes, but by the nobles, and even by the sovereign pontiffs themselves, and not only beloved, but held in the highest esteem and reverence. Yet, amidst all this applause, amidst all these opportunities of advancing himself, he always preserved his former humility and contempt of self. He very seldom went to visit the popes, the cardinals, or the princes, and then only that he might carry into effect some charitable purpose, or contribute to the general good. He would never accept pensions, benefices, or dignities of any kind. Three months before Philip died, he was talking in the most free and confidential manner, in his own room, with Bernardino Corona, a brother of the congregation; and, among other things, he said to him: "Bernardino, the Pope wants to make me a cardinal; what do you think of that?" Corona said he ought to accept the dignity, if for no other reason, at least for the good of the congregation. But the saint, taking off his cap and looking up to heaven, exclaimed, "Paradise! Paradise!"

Another time, some of his penitents spoke of the prelacies and honours of Rome, in connexion with his freedom and familiarity with the popes. But Philip said to them, "My sons, take my words as spoken in earnest; I would rather pray God to send me my death, than permit me to in-

dulge a thought of such dignities; I covet, indeed, the spirit and the virtues of cardinals and popes, but not their greatness."

It is related in the lives of the Fathers of the Desert, that a certain hermit, having lived a long time in the continual exercise of penance and prayer, and imagining himself to be already in a high degree of perfection, prayed one day, that God would let him know if he wanted anything whereby he might become more perfect. God, intending to humble him, caused him to hear a voice which commanded him to go and find out a man who kept hogs hard by, and then to do what he should bid him. He immediately obeyed, found him out, and saluted him, and prayed him to tell him what he was to do to please God. He knowing, it seems, by revelation, what he was to answer; "Will you do," said he, "what I shall bid you?" The hermit answering that he would; "Take the whip, then," replied the other, "and go and keep the hogs." The holy man, desiring ardently to serve God, and to make himself agreeable and more perfect in His sight, went immediately to do what the hogherd bade him. Now as the fame of his sanctity was spread over all that country, those who knew him and saw him so employed, said to one another: Have you observed, that that good old man, of whom so many wonderful things have been related, is turned fool, and gone to keep hogs? his continual fastings and austerities have turned his head. The holy man, who heard all this, took it patiently and went on yet some days in the same employment, till Almighty God, seeing his humility, and the spirit with which he bore affronts and injuries, commanded him to return to his own hermitage.

FIFTH DAY.

"God resisteth the proud and gives His grace to the humble."(a) —*St. James.*

"If I debase myself, reduce myself to my own nothingness, and put away from me all self-esteem, Thou, my God, wilt be liberal in grace to me, and Thy light will shine around my heart. Abandoned to myself, I am nothingness and mere infirmity; when Thou dost look upon me with benignity, I at once become strong, and am filled with a new gladness."—*Blessed Valfre.*

It was observed by one of the Fathers of the Desert, that all the labours of a monk are vain without humility; for, "since humility," said he, "is the forerunner of charity, as John the Baptist was the precursor of Christ, drawing all to Him, so in like manner humility draws men to charity, that is, to God Himself, for God is charity."

St. Antony having seen one day, in a vision, the whole earth as a large field, covered on all sides with the nets and snares of the enemy, sighing, he cried out: "Who shall be able to pass over them and escape?" And immediately he heard a voice answering: "Humility alone can pass secure."

The famous brother Justin, after having refused great favours and most honourable offices that the King of Hungary had offered to him, entered the order of St. Francis; and so great was his spiritual advancement, that he frequently fell into raptures. One day, whilst dining at the common table in the convent, he was suddenly raised into the air, and passing over the heads of all the religious, reverently kissed an image of the Blessed Virgin, painted high upon the wall. Hearing of which wonderful circumstance, the Pope Eugenius IV. sent for him, and embraced him, without permitting him to kiss his feet, as is usual. After

(a) James iv. 6.

which, he made him sit down by his side, and conversed with him for a considerable time, sending him away with many presents and holy indulgences. But, unhappily, brother Justin grew vain at this honour, so that shortly afterwards, St. John of Capistrano beholding him, exclaimed: "Alas, you left your convent an angel, but are returned a devil;" and so it turned out, for from that day he grew more and more insolent, till at last he committed such atrocities, that he was seized by the hand of justice and finished his days in a dungeon.

But as God, on the one side, resisteth the proud, and abandons him to the corruption of his own heart, so, on the other, He bestows His grace on the humble. "The humble man God protects and delivers," says the "Imitation of Christ;" "the humble he loves and comforts: to the humble He inclines Himself: to the humble He gives grace, and after he has been depressed, raises him to glory. To the humble He reveals His secrets, and sweetly draws and invites him to Himself."

It is related in the lives of the Fathers of the Desert, that St. Thais, after being converted from her wicked and scandalous life, was conducted by St. Paphnucius, who had effected her conversion, to a monastery of nuns, where he shut her up in a cell by herself, and stopped up the door, leaving only a small aperture, or window, through which he desired the sisters to convey her a little bread and water every day, which was to be her whole allowance for the remainder of her life.

Before he departed from her, she asked him what prayers he would recommend to her, and in what manner he would have her address herself

to God in prayer. "Thou art not worthy," said he, "either to invoke the sacred name of God with thy polluted lips, or lift up thy eyes towards heaven, after so many abominations, but it suffices that for thee to sit towards the east, and frequently to repeat these words: 'Thou who hast made me, have mercy on me.'"

She continued this course of penance, in her solitary inclosure, for the space of three years, till at length Pachomius, having compassion on her, went to consult the great St. Antony, at that time the oracle of Egypt, to learn whether God had accepted her penance, and pardoned her sins. St. Antony having assembled his disciples together, and exhorted them to pray that God would be pleased to let them know what Pachomius so earnestly required, St. Paul the Simple saw that very night in a vision a glorious throne, or bed of state, in heaven, surrounded by three virgins, glittering with beams of heavenly light; and whilst he was thinking with himself that this throne could be designed for no other than St. Antony, he was answered by a voice: "It is not for thy father Antony, but for Thais the harlot."

St. John Climachus tells us that a man of quality, who lived at Alexandria, went to request admission into a certain monastery. The abbot thereof believing, by his looks and other outward marks, that he was a vain-glorious man, and one who was yet puffed up with the pride and vanity of the world, wished to put him into the sure path of humility, and therefore told him, that if he was resolved to carry in good earnest the yoke of Jesus Christ, he must oblige himself to exercise obedience. "I am, father, very willing" said the gentleman; "and I put myself into your hands to

do with me, just as the smith does with the iron, which he forges into what shape he pleases." "Since it is so," replied the abbot, "I will have you stand at the monastery gate as under-porter, prostrating yourself at the feet of all who come in or go out, and begging of them to pray to God for you, because you are a great sinner." The gentleman obeyed most punctually, and after he had lived seven years in this exercise, and had acquired a great fund of humility, they were willing to receive him into the monastery, and admit him even to holy orders; but having got several persons, and among the rest St. John Climachus, to intercede that he might finish the course he had begun, in the station where he was, he obtained what he desired, and seemed in asking this favour to have had some foresight of his approaching death; for in ten days after, it happened, that God called him to Himself, and seven days after him the porter of the monastery died also; whom the gentleman, when he was alive, had promised, that if he should have any interest in heaven after his death, he would make use of it, that he might be quickly his companion in glory. This was the reward of his continual humiliations, which had made him so humble, that when the fore-mentioned St. Climachus asked him what he thought of whilst he practised those acts of humility, he answered, that he was always thinking how unworthy he was of the conversation of the religious; and that he deserved not so much as to behold them. St. Austin had then a very good reason to say, that humility draws God near us, and pride drives Him away from us. "God sits on high. Dost thou humble thyself? God will descend to thee. Dost thou exalt thyself? God flies from thee."

SIXTH DAY.

"The prayer of him that humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds, and he will not depart till the Most High behold." (a)—*The Wise Man.*

"All the edifice of prayer is grounded on humility, and the more the soul humbles herself in prayer, the more does God exalt her."—*St. Teresa.*

We have a most striking proof of this truth in the conduct of God towards the Pharisee and the Publican of the Gospel; for the proud Pharisee returned from his prayer with additional guilt, and became more abominable in the eyes of God; whereas the humble Publican, notwithstanding his own unworthiness, found favour and mercy before God, and returned home from his prayer renewed and justified. This same truth shines forth most conspicuously in the lives of the saints, and especially in the lives of those who most excelled in the gift of prayer. It was through humility that St. Teresa arrived to that sublime degree of contemplation which she herself describes in her life.

It was through humility that St. Rose obtained from God the highest gift of prayer. This virtue was so deeply rooted in her soul, that her labours seem to have been directed all her life to the contempt of herself and to the practice of every sort of humiliation and abjection.

To satisfy this predominant feeling of her heart, she did not find it sufficient to choose as her employment the vilest occupations of the house; she considered herself infinitely below the servant; and this sentiment of her miseries and unworthi-

(a) Eccli. xxxv. 21.

ness induced her often to cast herself at the feet of a poor country girl, who worked in the house, entreating her earnestly to strike her, to spit upon her, to trample her under foot, and to treat her as the most abject and contemptible creature in the world. When she received blows or harsh words on account of the retired life she led, she thought she well deserved them, and that by her own fault she had brought on herself this injurious treatment, and she suffered it with humility and patience.

As she was deeply penetrated with a sense of her own nothingness and misery, it was to her an insupportable cross to see herself honoured ; her humility could not bear to hear a word of praise ; and on this account, hearing one day a canon of the cathedral of Lima praising her in the course of the conversation, and extolling the favours she had received from Almighty God, she retired into her chamber, where she began to strike her breast, to weep and to groan in the presence of God ; and to punish herself for giving, as she thought, a false opinion of herself to men, she gave herself several violent blows on her head, to force in more deeply the points of the iron crown which she always wore concealed under her veil.

We also read that the venerable Father Da Ponte, a man especially blessed with the gift of prayer, had reached to such a high degree of humility, that although he saw himself esteemed by all, so as to be proclaimed a saint, and consulted as an oracle by prelates and other most important personages, he never felt the least emotion of pride, or looked on himself as of any value ; on the contrary, he faithfully ascribed to God whatever there was of good in him. " I acknowledge myself,"

says the holy man of himself, "unworthy of all the benefits I have, and of those which I have not; unworthy of the light with which I see, of the air which I breathe, of the water which I drink, of the bread which I eat, of the garments with which I am clad. I am unworthy of every spiritual light, of every celestial consolation, unworthy to receive Him in the holy Eucharist; unworthy to see Him later, face to face. No; I deserve not to live amongst men here on earth; and purgatory being the prison of noble souls, is not for me; the only place that is my due is at the feet of Lucifer, in hell." Then he continues: "Supposing, however, that I should fulfil my obligations towards God, He would in justice owe me nothing; and should He treat me with severity, I have no reason to complain. Being a slave and a beast of burden, He only treats me as I deserve. In fine, I ought to look upon myself as a sick man, covered with ulcers that infect my every action."

This was the way by which this servant of God reached so high a degree of contemplation, and acquired that ineffable union whereby our Lord united him to Himself. He continually wished to be looked upon by every one as a vile incapable creature, fit for nothing; and always bore in mind the saying of our Divine Redeemer to the holy virgin, St. Catherine of Sienna: "I am what I am; thou art what thou art not." From which he inferred, that since he was what he was not, that is nothingness, it was highly important to keep himself united to Him who is, and who is all in all, as from this union every good comes to us.

SEVENTH DAY.

"Unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, itself remaineth alone. But if it die it bringeth forth much fruit." (a) —*Our Blessed Saviour.*

"There is nothing more excellent, nothing more desirable, than humility. For it is the chief preserver and guardian of all virtues."—*St. Jerome.*

THIS truth was well understood by St. Gregory, who calls humility *the spring and root of all other virtues.* This metaphor of the root exactly agrees with it, and explains very well its propensities and conditions; for, first, in the words of St. Gregory, just as a flower draws all its freshness and beauty from the root, and quickly fades when it is plucked; even so, if any virtue whatever be separated from the root of humility, it withers directly, and is quite lost. Again, as the root lies deep under ground, and is trodden under foot, and has ordinarily neither beauty nor smell, yet it is, nevertheless, the principle both of the plant's life and nourishment; so humility makes him who is humble love to lie hid, as it were, under ground, and to be trod upon and despised. It shuns noise and splendour, and seeks only the obscurity of retirement; nevertheless it is this which preserves in itself all the other virtues, and makes them grow daily more and more. Lastly, as a tree must take deep root to bear well, and to live long, and the deeper the root is the longer the tree lives, and the more fruit it bears, according to the words of Isaias, *it shall shoot its root downwards, and bear fruit upwards;* so in order that other virtues should thrive and fructify in our

(a) St. John xii. 24, 25.

hearts, it is necessary that humility be deeply rooted there, and the deeper the root is, the more will these virtues increase, and the stronger will they grow.

Hence St. Austin teaches that all virtues which are not founded on humility are not real virtues; they are virtues only in appearance. The holy doctor, speaking of those of the ancient Romans and philosophers, asserts that they were not real virtues; not only because they were not animated by charity, which gives spirit and life to all other virtues, but because they had not the foundation of humility. For in fortitude, justice, temperance, and all their acts of virtue, these persons sought only worldly esteem and reputation, so that their virtues were rather the ghosts or phantoms of virtues than real ones. Treating likewise particularly of those of the ancient Romans, he says, that as they were virtues only in appearance, so God rewarded them with the good things of this world only, which also are only apparent goods.

Desiring to make great saints of his congregation, St. Liguori incessantly prescribed to them humility as the foundation of all perfection. "Humility," he said, "is necessary in the mission, and it is necessary in the house, my brethren; humility at all times, and in all places, if we would please God. Our aim in the congregation is to imitate Jesus Christ, but it is Jesus Christ humbled and despised. To this all our rules tend, and it is the principal end of our institute. He who does not propose this end to himself, not only will never advance, but will always go backward. He who has humility will have sanctity, but without humility all fails. For want of this virtue, Lucifer became the prince of the devils.

It is humility which distinguishes the Catholic from the Protestant."

It happened, one day, that a father chanced to use the expression, "On my honour." This was a great fault in the eyes of Alphonso. The Saturday following, during the conference, he incessantly repeated, "On my honour!" "On my honour!" "Our honour," said he, "is to be despised, vilified, and like Jesus Christ, to become the approbrium of men, and the abjection of the people." He could not calm himself after hearing a word like this, so inconsistent with the spirit of true humility.

As he delighted in seeing others walk in the path of humility, so was St. Liguori himself most diligent in the practice of it. For this purpose he behaved like one of the servants in his own house; he made his bed himself, dressed his own issue, and never allowed a valet to come near his person. Although Bishop of St. Agatha, he seemed rather to consider himself the sacristan. "By God's grace," he one day said, "I have never felt vainglorious. Once only, when I was being incensed on my throne, I felt a sort of pleasing sensation. Now, see," he added, "how the devil tried to tempt me." When he went out of his palace, he never would be accompanied by more than one priest. A strange dealer, who sold spectacles, happened to meet him one day, and being deceived by his air of extreme simplicity, he thought he was speaking to a poor priest; he therefore approached him, and said to him: "If your reverence want a pair of spectacles, I have excellent ones here." When he heard that this was the bishop, he hurried off in great confusion as fast as possible.

Animated by a similar love for Christian humi-

lity, the blessed Valfré strove with all his might to humble himself before God and men. When he heard that Victorius Amedeus was determined to nominate him to the archbishopric of Turin, he was greatly alarmed, and from a sincere sense of his own unworthiness, tried every possible means to prevent the nomination. Thinking that the condition of his relatives, and the lowliness of his birth, might shield him from the honour which was offered to him, he one day said to the prince: "Does your royal highness think that a miserable priest, whose relations are hoeing the fields, should be the archbishop of this your metropolis?" And having sent for one of his brothers from Verduno, who was to come to him dressed in the same clothes in which he worked in the field, he took him to the court, and making him pass through all the antechambers, said to the guards and gentlemen in waiting: "Do you see? This is one of my brothers;" and he thus presented him to the sovereign.

The same spirit of sincere and profound humility induced St. Francis of Sales to use every means in his power to prevent his appointment to the coadjutorship of the Bishop of Geneva. On being informed of the intention of the bishop on this subject, at first he felt a little confused and agitated, but resuming the usual calm of his soul, he replied that he was extremely obliged for the intended favour; that nothing could be added to the gratitude which he felt for the offer of a dignity, which all the world admire, which some covet, but which the greatest number do not sufficiently dread; that as to himself, he could not but observe an infinite disproportion between his own qualifications and the episcopal dignity; that

he knew himself better than others could know him; that therefore he conjured his venerable prelate to look out for some other person, more worthy than himself of this exalted dignity.

Seeing that his bishop could not be prevailed upon to change his mind, he wrote to him a second time, begging him in a most pressing manner not to lay upon him such a heavy burden; and it was only after receiving a strict command that he bowed down his head in humble submission to obedience. He had no sooner given his consent, than he was overwhelmed with the deepest affliction which he had ever experienced in his whole life. He seemed to himself to be at the point of being exposed to the horrors of a boisterous sea, in which he foresaw a thousand dangers of shipwreck, and in which he feared others which he was unable to foresee; and, in the bitterness of his heart, he was sometimes insensibly led to exclaim, with a loud voice: "Save us, O Lord, we are perishing." Those who went to offer their congratulations were astonished to witness his deep affliction; and as they ventured to express their surprise, he said, with much feeling: "Alas! it was assuredly enough to have to answer for my own soul, without undertaking the charge of so many others, of whom God will demand of me so terrible an account." At length the lively apprehension of the dangers to which he believed he was to be exposed, produced such a powerful effect, that he entirely lost his rest and fell grievously ill.

EIGHTH DAY.

"If any man think that he knoweth anything, he has not yet known as he ought to know."(a)—*The Apostle St. Paul.*

"Believe me, that a little attention to acquire humility, and one act of this virtue, are worth more before God's infinite wisdom, than all the learning of the world."—*St. Teresa.*

THE great doctor, St. Austin, deeply penetrated with this truth soon after his conversion, applied himself to cultivate the virtue of humility with such diligence, as to excel in it no less than he excelled in learning. We have a remarkable instance of his humility in his controversy with St. Jerome. Perceiving that his letters to St. Jerome, in which he showed a difference of opinion, respecting some texts of Scripture, had given him some pain, he immediately wrote to him another letter, in which he conjured him, by the meekness of Christ, to pardon him what he had offended him in, thankfully submitted himself to his reprehension and reproof, professing himself always ready to be taught by him as his master, and corrected by him as his censor, and desiring to drop the inquiry, if it caused any breach of friendship, that they might provide for their mutual salvation. "I entreat you again and again," says he in another letter, "to correct me confidently when you perceive me to stand in need of it; for, though the office of a bishop be greater than that of a priest, yet in many things is Austin inferior to Jerome;" and he imputes the whole blame of this dispute to himself, and his own negligence. The holy doctor grieved exceedingly to see the debate betwixt him and Ruffinus carried on with warmth, and conjured them, with the greatest tenderness imaginable, to forbear invectives.

(a) 1 Cor. viii. 2.

" Could I meet you both together in any place," said he, "I would fall down at your feet; I would weep as long as I were able; I would beseech as much as I love you, sometimes each for himself, then each one for the other, and for many others, especially the weak for whom Christ died." This saint always dreaded the itch of vain-glory in literary contests, in which men love an opinion, as he says, " Not because it is true, but because it is their own; and they dispute, not for the truth, but for the victory." For his part he was so much on his guard to shun this rock, that charity and humility were nowhere more visibly the governing principles of his heart than on such occasions.

He trembled always at the danger of secret complacency, or vain-glory, amidst the praises of others. Thus he writes of his temptation in his confessions: " We are daily assaulted, O Lord, with these temptations; we are tempted without ceasing. The tongues of men are as a furnace, in which we are daily tried. Thou knowest the groans of my heart to thee concerning this thing, and the floods of my eyes. For I cannot easily discover the advances that I make towards being more clean from this plague; and I very much dread my hidden sins, which are seen by Thine eyes, but not by mine. In other temptations I have some way by which I may justify myself; but none at all in this." He complains, in a letter to Aurelius, Archbishop of Carthage, much more bitterly how subtly and imperceptibly this dangerous vice insinuates itself into our souls, adding: " This I write to discover my evils to you, that you may know in what things to pray to God for my infirmities." Sincere humility made him love, at every turn, to confess his ignorance, and no

less readily than candidly he often said, "I know it not;" an answer which does more honour to him than the greatest display of wit and learning.

St. Jane Frances was once told that one of the superioresses had a fine mind, that her convent was superior to every other in the province, that she was spoken of in all the higher circles of society; in a word, that her house was quite the vogue. The blessed mother was sensibly touched by this, and only replied as follows: "I am never so much pleased about our houses as when I hear that humility, devotion, and love of solitude, reign in them, and that their spirit shines only in simplicity, poverty, and the contempt of the world." It is related of St. Arsenius, that although he was so learned in human sciences before he quitted the world, as to be perfect master both of the Greek and Latin, and had, after retiring into the wilderness, received such extraordinary lights from God for understanding spiritual matters, that no one had a more perfect knowledge, or could better explain the most difficult passages, of the Holy Scriptures than himself, yet he would never speak of these matters by his own choice, but rather preferred to consult and hearken to the most illiterate of the brethren, provided he were truly humble. Being asked one day, why he, being so learned a man, sought instruction and counsel from a certain solitary, who was quite destitute of all human literature, he replied: "It is true, whilst I was in the world, I acquired some knowledge of the sciences of the world, and in the Greek and Latin tongues; but since I have left the world, I have not yet been able to learn the A B C of the true science of the saints, of which this ignorant rustic is master." Such were his humble sentiments of himself.

NINTH DAY.

"I confess to Thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones. Yes, Father, for so hath seemed good in Thy sight."(a)—*Our Blessed Saviour.*

"See your vocation, brethren, that there are not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but the foolish things of the world hath God chosen that He may confound the wise; and the weak things of the world hath God chosen that He may confound the strong; and the base things of the world, and the things that are contemptible hath God chosen, and things that are not, that He may bring to nought the things that are. That no flesh should glory in His sight."(b) —*The Apostle St. Paul.*

Ecclesiastical history teaches us that the treasures of the wisdom and knowledge of God, which our Lord Jesus Christ possessed in all their fulness, are communicated to His disciples in proportion as they divest themselves of the proud spirit of the world, and put on the humble spirit of their crucified Redeemer.

The great St. Antony went into the desert in order to conceal himself entirely from the eyes of men and attend solely to holy contemplation. But God, whose eyes are especially bent upon humble souls, did not permit that this His faithful servant should long remain unknown in the wilderness, but imparted to him so much wisdom, and gave him so great a power over the spirits of darkness, that people flocked from all parts, to consult him and to recommend themselves to his prayers. The reputation of his sanctity and heavenly wisdom spread so far, that it even reached the imperial court, insomuch that the Emperor Constantine

(a) St. Matt. xi. 25, 26. (b) 1 Cor. i. 26, 29.

the Great, and his sons Constance and Constantius, wrote several times to him, and begged that he would favour them with an answer. And, on his part, he made very little account of this honour, but told his disciples, that they should not think it much, that an emperor, who was no more than a mortal man, should write to him; but rather they ought to admire, and bear always in mind, that the eternal God had been so good, as not only to write His laws for man, but to send down His only Son to deliver His word to them. However, at the desire of all the brethren, he returned an answer, in which, after congratulating with the emperor, &c., for their believing in, and worshipping Christ, he gave them wholesome instructions for the welfare of their souls; advising them not to make any great account of their worldly grandeur and power, nor of any of those things that pass away with time; and never to forget that they were mortals, who must quickly appear before another judge. He also reminded them of their obligation to show clemency to their subjects, to render them justice, and to succour the poor and distressed; and that they must remember, that the true and everlasting King of all ages is Jesus Christ alone.

We read in the life of St. Ignatius, that being at Rome, and knowing little of the Italian language, he yet did so much in gaining souls by the Christian exhortations which he made in a plain and homely way, that often when the exhortation was ended the auditors went to throw themselves at their confessors' feet; and their hearts were so touched with sorrow, that, such were their sighs and groans, they could scarcely utter a word. The reason was that he founded all the strength

of his discourse, not on the persuasive words of human wisdom, but on the demonstration of the spirit and of the power of the Holy Ghost. Now, as he had a diffidence in himself, and put all his confidence in God, God also gave a great power and virtue to what he said, so that all his words seemed so many burning arrows, wherewith he pierced the hearts of his hearers.

St. Teresa having applied herself with all her heart and soul to the practice of humility from the moment that she resolved in good earnest to belong solely and entirely to God, attained such an intimate union with His Divine Majesty, and received from Him such an abundance of heavenly light, that not only most learned divines, but the Church herself looks upon her as an especially privileged soul, to whom God was pleased to reveal His heavenly wisdom, and who was chosen by Him to promote His honour and glory.

Ecclesiastical history contains innumerable facts which prove that God usually entrusts the execution of His greatest works to the humble; as they attribute all to God and nothing to themselves, so God gives them His helping hand, makes it His own business, and is pleased to work wonders by their instrumentality, *to show*, as the Apostle says, *the riches of His glory upon those vessels of His mercy, which He had before prepared for His glory.*(a) It is to make His glory appear the more that He puts the treasures of His power and strength in the frailest vessels, and therefore when St. Paul prayed to be delivered from the temptations which tormented him; *My grace is sufficient for thee*, says our Lord to him, *for my power appears most in weakness.*(b) Thus St.

(a) Rom. ix. 23. (b) 2 Cor. xii. 9.

Austin and St. Ambrose explain this passage, and it is for this reason, that God powerfully assists those who, knowing themselves, have a diffidence in themselves, and place all their confidence in Him; whereas He always abandons those who presume upon themselves, and confide in their own strength and ability.

TENTH DAY.

"Take heed that you do not your justice before men, to be seen by them, otherwise you shall not have a reward of your Father who is in heaven."(a)—*Our Blessed Saviour.*

"'Borrow empty vessels not a few,' said Eliseus to the poor widow, 'and pour your oil into them.' From these words we have to learn that our hearts must be empty of vain-glory before the grace of God can be poured into them."—*St. Francis of Sales.*

One of the religious of the retreat of St. Bonaventure wrote to ask the blessed Leonard if he would come to Rome after Easter, and he replied in these words: "I have many reasons for not going to Rome, but two especially. First, the flattery of the world, which over estimates me, a miserable sinner, and causes me thereby much distress. Secondly, the loss of time, and dissipation of spirit. I desire to renounce the world; why, then, should I spend my time in it? Since I am crucified to the world and forsake it, I wish to be forgotten by the world. My vocation is the giving of missions and solitude. The missions, in which I am ever employed for the love of God;

(a) St. Matt. vi. 1.

and solitude, in which I am ever occupied with God: all else is vanity."

The love of self-abasement induced him to put an end to all communication with persons of distinction who had been his intimate friends; and if circumstances obliged him to meet them, he simply satisfied their wishes, and took leave of them as soon as possible. He used to say on this subject: "It is not for a religious, who humbly professes to follow the teaching of the cross, to be seen every day in the palaces of noblemen, and to seem ambitious of corresponding with the great people in the world. He rejoiced whenever he was made contemptible in the eyes of men; and when anything occurred to humble him, he used to say: "Humble thyself, proud man." On one occasion when he went to the Solitude dell' Incontro to perform his spiritual exercises, he gave a signal proof of his wonderful humility. I shall relate it in the words of the president of that sanctuary, who has left it thus written: "When I was President of the Solitude dell' Incontro, Father Leonard came to perform the exercises, along with brother Diego: one morning they were both kneeling in the refectory, Father Leonard accusing himself of his faults; when I was seized with a sudden desire to try his spirit, and amongst other things said this: 'You seem to be a great man, Father Leonard, on account of your missions, and because you have preached a few sermons all wish to have you, and proclaim you to be a great missionary. Ah! what pride you must have in your heart. Rise up, then, brother Diego, stand up and put your foot on his neck, and say, "Father Leonard, humble yourself." I had no sooner pronounced the words than I felt sorry, and said to

myself, 'What have I done?' However, I soon found that my words had been for his spiritual good, for he was quite composed, resigned, and in peace, and with a joyful countenance, he turned to me and said: 'May Almighty God reward you.'" This same president frequently exercised him in similar acts of humiliation, but the blessed man was never disturbed, and always thanked him with all his heart. He constantly desired that all things might tend to his self-abasement, and has left it thus written: "I desire to be despised and treated with contempt, abused and trodden under foot like dirt, and I pray to God that I may die in some obscure place, where I am supposed to be a reprobate, and my body thrown into a ditch, without honour."

It is related in the life of St. Philip, that one day having called to him Francesco Zazzara, who was young and occupied with his law studies, and took great pains to perfect himself in that study in order that he might rise at court; he began to lavish the most unusual caresses upon him, and at the same time to lay open to him all the secret designs of his heart. "O happy you!" said he, "now you are studying, then you will be made doctor, and begin to gain money, and to advance your family; you will be an advocate, and then some day you may be raised to be a prelate;" and so he went on, describing step by step all the honours which the world could give, or had ever passed through the youth's imagination, repeating again: "O happy you! then you will think you have been recompensed according to your deserts, and will want nothing more." Francesco thought that the saint spoke truly; but Philip, pressing his ear to his bosom as he knelt at his feet, whispered into it:

"And then? and then? what will become of you after all this?" These words remained so deeply impressed upon the young man's heart, that when he got home he began to say within himself: "I study to get on in the world, and then?" Reasoning thus with himself, he found he could not get these words out of his heart, and he at last resolved to turn all his thoughts and plans to God, a resolution which he executed by entering into the congregation of the Oratory, when he gave great edification to all who knew him, and died in the odour of sanctity.

"Oh, how quickly," says the "Imitation of Christ," "does the glory of the world pass away! How many perish in the world through vain learning, who take little care of the service of God. And because they choose rather to be great than to be humble; therefore they are lost in their own imaginations. He is truly great, who is great in charity. He is truly great, who is little in his own eyes, and makes no account of the height of honour. A good life makes a man wise according to God, and expert in many things. The more humble a man is in himself, and more subject to God, the more wise will he be in all things, and the more at peace."

ELEVENTH DAY.

"What hast thou that thou hast not received? And if thou hast received, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it."(a) —*The Apostle St. Paul.*

"Give to God what is His, and take to thyself what is thine: that is, give thanks to God for His grace: but as for thyself, be sensible that nothing is to be attributed to thee but sin, and the punishment due to sin. Put thyself always in the lowest place, and the highest shall be given to thee; for the highest stands not without the lowest. The saints that are highest in the sight of God, are the least in their own eyes; and the more glorious they are, the more humble they are in themselves. Being full of the truth and heavenly glory, they are not desirous of vain glory. They that are grounded and established in God, can by no means be proud. And they that attribute to God all whatsoever good they have received, seek not glory from one another, but that glory which is from God alone; and desire above all things that God may be praised in themselves, and in all the saints; and to this same they always tend."—*Thomas à Kempis.*

Few persons have been more admired by men for their great virtue and merit than St. Francis of Sales. And to one of his admirers, he replied, in the language of the Apostle, that having nothing which we have not received from God, we have no right to glory in ourselves; to others he observed, that he who plants or he who waters is not to be considered, but that success is wholly to be ascribed to God, who gives the increase; that it is vain for men to speak to the senses, unless God speaks to the heart, and that He who made all things out of nothing, could easily perform wonders with the vilest instrument. His conduct fully corresponded with these sentiments. He could not endure that more than usual deference should be paid to himself; he was ever accessible, and familiar with the poor; the most

(a) 1 Cor. iv. 7.

splendid employments he left to others, while he reserved for himself whatever was mean and laborious. His meekness and patience, instead of experiencing any diminution, seemed daily to increase; never did he avail himself of the advantages of noble birth, of the credit he enjoyed, or of the esteem and confidence of his sovereign; he received affronts without resentment, and appeared insensible to any other objects but the interest of God and His Church.

We read of the blessed Leonard, that even when he was performing the greatest wonders for the glory of God and the salvation of souls by his missions, he was never heard to utter a word which redounded to his own praise, and all that he said tended to his self-abasement. Although great and abundant fruit was gathered from his preaching, and still more from his virtuous example, and although he saw himself universally applauded and esteemed, he never became vainglorious, but was confused and covered with blushes, attributing it to the simplicity of the people, who made these demonstrations of satisfaction because they knew not what he was. It often happened that in walking through the streets the people crowded to look at him, kiss his hand, and impede his progress; but he, quite abstracted, seemed unconscious of the cause, and so pursued his way.

Sometimes his companions asked him what he thought of this devotion of the people, and he would reply: "Brother, they are very simple: they do not know me: if they did, they would not make these demonstrations." The low esteem he had of himself caused him to be the most humble to every one, and to count himself the

worst of men was a usual and continual thing with him. He often in the convent knelt and confessed that he was a broken reed, and that whilst he was promoting the salvation of others, and inflaming them with the love of God, he remained cold and hard-hearted, and begged of them to pray to God to grant him grace, that in preaching to others, and leading them to heaven, he might not be a castaway, and lose his own soul. He spoke these words with so much feeling and weeping, that all believed they came from a heart truly humble, and from the mouth of one who esteemed himself worthless. Wherever he went to give missions, the first thing he did after visiting the church, was to go to the parish priest to kiss his hand, and ask his blessing. When he preached the sermon of devotion to our Blessed Lady, he publicly kissed the feet of all the priests present, and by this act of humility he obtained for many the grace to abandon their sins, and to be reconciled to their enemies.

He was aware that when the missions were ended, he would be followed by the people on his departure; therefore he set off before daybreak, without being perceived; and if he was obliged to pass through places where he was known, he drew his hood over his head, and walked very fast, and sometimes preferred going far out of his way to being met by any one whom he knew, for he feared the honours they would pay him more than the worldling would fear affronts and ill-usage. When he gave missions in his native place, his fellow-citizens wished to have his portrait, as he appeared in the attitude of preaching, and it was taken unknown to him. When it was finished, they brought it to him, and asked if he could tell

whom it resembled. On looking at the picture he became quite confused, and turning to them, said: "What have you done? May God forgive you." He wept and seemed so distressed, that his friends were touched with compunction and much edified, and said one to the other: "We believed we were doing something to please Father Leonard, and we have made him weep."

St. Ignatius was so impressed with the truth that every best gift and every perfect gift is descended from above, from the Father of Light, that even in the midst of the highest fervour and devotion with which he was blessed by God, he never felt any emotion to vain-glory. The more God opened His hand, the greater did he consider his own weakness and wretchedness, attributing all the favours he received to his need of extraordinary support. He prayed God to shut up these fountains of heavenly consolation which inundated his soul, that he might be more cautious and careful in His service; and when his prayer was not heard, he said that God showed him these mercies, that being old and fit for nothing else, he might at least have opportunity for prayer.

The holy David, when he offered to God the gold, silver, and other materials, which he had amassed for the building of the Temple, thus prayed to him: "All things belong to thee, O Lord; what we have received from Thy hands we have given back to Thee." Thus also ought we to express ourselves, when we do any good work; for as St. Austin says very well: "Whoever enumerates his merits to Thee, what else does he do, but enumerate, O Lord, Thy own mercies? It is by an effect of Thy infinite goodness and liberality, that Thou ascribest anything to our merit; so that when

Thou rewardest our services Thou dost but crown Thy own gifts, and heap upon us one favour after another." God deals with us as Joseph did with his brethren; He is not satisfied with giving us the corn we have need of for our sustenance; He gives us also the money which it costs, He gives us grace and glory. Everything comes from Him, and we ought also to return everything to Him, by ascribing still to Him the honour of all things.

TWELFTH DAY.

"Dust thou art, and into dust thou shalt return." (a)—*Our Blessed Lord.*

"Have these three things always present in your mind:—What you were, what you are, and what you shall be."—*St. Bernard.*

THE venerable Margaret Alacoque was so deeply penetrated with the thought of her own nothingness, that she believed that all creatures had a right to treat her with contempt, and was really afflicted at not being sufficiently despised. She asked her superiors to humble her often, and the proof of her sincerity in this point is clear, for what she requested was readily granted. In fact, her superiors were always very liberal to her in this kind of favour; either to be more certainly assured of the truth of the supernatural favours received by her from God, or to prevent more efficaciously the vanity these graces might occasion in her. Several persons, from the reputation

(a) Gen. iii. 19.

of her singular holiness, came to see her, either from curiosity or to consult her on matters of importance ; others wrote to her, requesting her advice ; and to all this much praise was added. These praises and marks of esteem, which might have given pleasure to other hearts, were to her a grievous pain and trial. " O my God !" she would sometimes say, " rather arm all the furies of hell against me, than the tongues of men with their vain praises and empty applauses."

The love of humiliation and the hidden life sometimes led her to entreat God to efface her from the memory of all creatures, or that He would make her ingratitude, her sins and defects, with all their deformity, so known to the whole world, that no one might even think of her without feelings of horror and contempt. She particularly asked Him, with much earnestness, that He would be pleased to conceal all the favours with which He honoured her, and to make nothing appear but what would lessen her in the eyes of all, and turn to her own confusion.

The following rules, which she laid down for herself in order to practise humility and charity to the best of her power, show the great and wonderful progress she must have made in these virtues :—" I will consider all those who afflict or speak ill of me as my best friends, and will endeavour to do them all the service and all the good that lies in my power. I will endeavour not to speak of myself, or at least very briefly, and never, if possible, in praise or justification. I will regard myself as a beggar in the house of God, who ought to be submissive to all, and to whom all is done and given through charity ; and I will always think that I have too much."

When St. Francis Borgia was yet a secular, he was told by a holy man, that if he wished to make good progress in the service of God, he must let no day pass without reflecting upon something which might excite in him shame and contempt of himself. He embraced this counsel with so much fervour, that after he had given himself to mental prayer, he never failed to employ the first two hours thereof to know and despise himself, and to turn whatever he heard, read, or saw, to his own confusion. Besides this he practised another devotion, which was, that every morning when he rose, the first thing he did was to fall down and kiss the ground three times, to remind himself that he was but dust and ashes. And the many and great examples which he has left us of humility and sanctity, plainly show what fruit he reaped from these exercises of piety.

The same saint being one day on a journey, was met by one of his friends, a man of quality, who seeing him destitute of all the conveniences which he enjoyed before in the world, and feeling for him, begged of him to take a little more care of himself. The saint answered, with a cheerful countenance and holy dissimulation, thus: "Let not the condition in which you see me in the least trouble you; I am not so unprovided of all things as you think; for I always send a harbinger, who takes care to have everything ready before me." The person asking him who was that harbinger, "It is," replied the saint, "the knowledge of myself, and the consideration of the pains of hell, which I have deserved for my sins; and with this self-knowledge wherever I arrive, and whatever bad lodging I find, I always think I am better treated than I deserve."

The blessed Claver, deeply impressed with the same feelings of his own unworthiness and nothingness, commonly called himself a miserable worm of the earth, and said that if he were well known, people would flee from him as from a putrid corpse; hence he never thought he ever did enough to expiate his guilt. One day when he was disciplining himself, the superior passed near his room, and entered to tell him to moderate his austerities, and finding him with a crown of thorns upon his head, and curb in his mouth, he reprehended him for his indiscreet excess. "Ah! father," answered Claver, with a sigh, "I have contracted so many debts, that it is impossible for me to discharge them." Everything he saw served only to confound him. At the sight of the heavens and the stars he would say: "What! so many, and such noble creatures accomplish the Will of God without resistance; whilst a miserable worm of the earth like me incessantly resists it!" If he cast his eyes on a bed of flowers, he said to himself: "Ungrateful creature! after so many celestial influences, thou hast produced nothing but thorns." Once, looking at a pond of muddy water, he said: "Thus is the pure water of grace corrupted in my impure heart!" At seeing a piece of iron put into a furnace: "It is thus I ought to be purified in the fire, so to avoid the flames of hell. If Thou dost not treat me thus, O my God, never wilt Thou soften the hardness of my heart." If he was requested to recommend some affair to God: "There would be no surer means of losing," he answered. When he assisted criminals at their execution, he embraced them, and said, with much tenderness: "Alas, brother! why am I not as you are, and at your feet? take me with you, and do not leave me longer in this miserable world."

St. Teresa considered the knowledge of ourselves so important for the practice of humility, that she said that a man, however he may have advanced in virtue, ought never to lose sight of it. "The consideration of one's self," said she, "ought never to be omitted, nor should any soul given to prayer think herself so strong as not to stand in need of becoming a child. This must never be forgotten, and perhaps I shall speak more about it, because it is very important, and also because there is no degree of prayer so high in which it will not be necessary to return again to the first principles. And this knowledge of ourselves and of our sins, is the bread with which all our meals ought to be eaten in this road of prayer, for, however sumptuous these meals may be, they cannot nourish us unless we have this bread."

THIRTEENTH DAY.

"Why is earth and ashes proud?"(a)—*The Wise Man.*

"I will consider myself who and what I am, making use of such comparisons as may lead me to despise myself. I will place myself in the presence of men, and see what an atom I am among such a vast multitude. Then I will put all men who live upon the earth by the side of the angels and the blessed in heaven. Then I will confront both these multitudes, and all things created, or possible to be created with God. Then what is such a small and vile man by himself in comparison of God? I will look in a practical way at my own corruption, the wickedness of my mind, and the foulness of my body, and shrink from a horrible abscess which sends forth the filthiness of sin and the pestilence of vice."—*St. Ignatius.*

THESE feelings had sunk so deeply into the soul of that great missionary, Father Segneri, that in the midst of the highest honour which he received from men, he looked upon himself with the greatest contempt, and sincerely wished to be despised by others. In a letter to a friend, he writes as follows: "I say it with extreme confusion that I am a mere novice, for there is no consideration which confounds me more than the thought that I have only just begun, after spending twenty-three years in religion; and among all the verses of David, I do not find one which afflicts me so much, or touches me more nearly than that 'Ego dixi, nunc cœpi.'"

People ran after him, and prostrated themselves as to an angel. In many places they would sweep the streets for many miles during night where he had to pass the next morning, sometimes strewing

(a) Eccli. x. 9.

them with flowers; and others would go out to meet him with a canopy, nor could anything restrain their fervour. It is impossible to express how great was the attention they paid to his sermons, how they loved him, and submitted to him all their differences; how eager they were to obtain anything which had belonged to him, even the scraps of bread which remained on the table at which he had taken his meal, or the very water in which he had washed his feet.

The boards on which he had stood when preaching were held in veneration, and sometimes the people ran to cut them in pieces, carrying them away as relics, heedless of the cries and even blows of the owner, to prevent them from carrying away the spoil. When he crossed by water from one place to another, the sailors were all eager to receive him into their boats, esteeming themselves thus secure for ever against the tempests; and no sooner had the father reached the opposite bank than he was assailed by whole crowds who were awaiting his arrival, some to kiss his hand, and others to touch him with their beads. These practices were at length carried to such an extent, that in many places, and particularly on the Riviera di Genova, it was thought necessary to station a guard around him for his defence, as the people ceased not to press upon him and to tear his garments. Not unfrequently also it was necessary to put him in a covered conveyance, without which it would have been impossible to proceed from place to place.

Those singular demonstrations of reverence which have been mentioned, so far from exciting in him any motion of pride, fixed still deeper in his mind the opinion that he was a miserable

sinner, and he would frequently say to the father who accompanied him, with feelings of the deepest emotion: "Oh! if they did but know me. Oh! what confusion will be my lot in the day of judgment." At other times, fetching a deep sigh, he would exclaim to the same companion: "Father, do you think I shall save my soul?" When the last penitential procession was advancing, he would sometimes stop to see it pass along the road, and there, whilst leaning upon his staff, and filled with admiration at the extraordinary signs of compunction evinced by such a multitude of people, it was observed that his whole frame trembled, whilst with mournful sighs he repeated softly to himself: "Alas, poor wretch! alas! poor wretch that I am!" for he thought that these mortifications practised by others were a severe reproach to him for his sins, and a condemnation of his tepidity.

The venerable Father Pinamonti, Father Segneri's most faithful companion in the missions, was also most remarkable for the intimate knowledge and contempt which he had of himself. This was the darling virtue of his heart, this the foundation on which he raised the edifice of religious perfection, and, in fine, this constituted the essence of all his virtuous actions, inasmuch as there always shone forth in them some ray of humility. He was humble in his carriage and in his words; humble in his actions and conversations; and, above all, most humble in the opinion and contempt he had of himself. All his thoughts and all the affections of his soul were imbued with the spirit of extraordinary humility. He was by many called the original of that golden work entitled, "The mirror which never deceives,"

because in the composition of it he had done nothing else than give a faithful description of himself; all his actions being framed by the rule of humility which he prescribes in that work. It is not easy to conceive how ingenious he was in concealing his endowments of nature and of grace, that he might escape every species of applause, on account of his talents and virtue.

FOURTEENTH DAY.

"The imagination and the thought of man's heart are prone to evil from his youth."(a)—*Our Lord.*

"Oh, how great is human frailty, which is always prone to vice! To-day thou confessest thy sins, and to-morrow thou again committest what thou hast confessed. Now thou resolvest to take care, and an hour after thou dost as if thou hadst never resolved. We have reason, therefore, to humble ourselves, and never to think much of ourselves, since we are so frail and inconstant. That may also quickly be lost through negligence, which with much labour and time was hardly gotten by grace."—*Thomas à Kempis.*

THE great St. Austin used often to ask the grace from the Lord, of knowing His Divine greatness, and his own meanness. "Noverim te, noverim me." St. Francis of Assisium was also accustomed to cry out to the Lord, with these words: "Who art Thou, my God, and who am I?"

St. Bonaventure says, that as when the rays of the sun enter into a chamber, we immediately discover a thousand atoms, which we saw not before; so when our heart is touched with the rays of

(a) Genes. viii. 21.

Divine grace, the soul perceives even the least imperfections, and sees a thousand faults, in those things which seem perfect to such as are not enlightened with so bright and piercing a light as this is. This is, therefore, the cause why the saints are so humble, and have so low an opinion of themselves, and that as they increase in sanctity, they increase in humility, and in a contempt of themselves. The more God enlightens them, and communicates Himself to them, the more they perceive that they have of their own only nothingness and sin; and the more defects this self-knowledge makes them discover in themselves, the more they believe there are still to be discovered; and that they see but the least of them. In fine, as they are persuaded, that the goodness of God exceeds all the knowledge they have of it, so they are also convinced, that their own wickedness surpasses all the knowledge they have thereof. For as whatever knowledge we have of God, we can never comprehend Him, but there is always something in Him to be more and more known and admired; so whatever knowledge and contempt we may have of ourselves, there always remains something more to be despised, and therefore we can never know fully the excess of our misery. This is no exaggeration, it is a plain truth; because it being certain, that man is of himself only nothing and sin, it is consequently certain, that he can never humble himself so much as these two qualities require.

We read that a holy woman begged of God the grace to know herself, and having obtained it, she had so much horror of her deformity and misery, that unable to bear the sight, she prayed again, that He would hide some part of it from her, lest

she should be too much dejected. Father Avila tells us also, that he knew a certain person, who had often made a similar request of God, and that God having one day opened his eyes, to let him see his misery, he was struck with so much horror, that he cried out: "Take away, O Lord, for thy mercies sake, this looking-glass from before me; I am not able to bear any longer the sight of so abominable an object."

This is the cause, also, why the servants of God conceived a holy hatred and horror of themselves. For looking upon themselves as enemies of God, the more they come to know His goodness and to love Him, the greater aversion they have for themselves, according to the words of Job: *Thou hast set me opposite to Thee, so that I am become a burden to myself.* (a) They see that they have in themselves the root of all sorts of evil, which is the corrupt inclination of the flesh, and the knowledge of all this makes them rise up and revolt against themselves. Is it not just, then, to abhor him who has made you quit so great a good as God Himself is, and that for a pleasure of so short duration? Is it not just to hate him who has made you deserve hell, and put you in hazard of losing glory, and that for ever;—him who, in fine, has been the cause of so much evil to you, and will be so for ever? Now, it is you yourself, who are an enemy to God, and to yourself, an enemy to your own good and to your eternal salvation.

How many saints, and great ones too, have fallen for having forgotten that they were sinners, and for confiding too much in the favour God had shown them? They hazarded themselves upon

(a) Job vii. 20.

that confidence and trusted to it, as if they had been out of all danger ; and therefore they have shamefully fallen. St. Basil attributes the fall of David, when he made himself guilty of adultery and murder, to the presumption into which he had once fallen, when God having heaped favours and blessings upon him, he let these words slip from him : *I said in my prosperity nothing shall ever move me.* But stay a little, God will withdraw His hand, He will deprive you of His favours, and then you will see the consequence. *Thou hast turned Thy face from me, and I was grievously troubled.* God will leave you to your weakness ; you will fall into a thousand disorders, and you will know to your cost, after you fall, what you would not know when He favoured you with His grace. St. Basil attributes further the fall of St. Peter to the same cause, which was for having too much presumed upon himself, when he said to our Saviour : *Though all should be scandalized at Thee, I will not be scandalized. Nay, though I should die with Thee, I would never deny Thee.* So that it pleased God to punish his presumption and permit him to fall, thereby to humble and make him know himself.

The Chronicles of the order of St. Francis relate that a holy religious, called brother Giles, having heard of the fall of Father Elias, who had been general of the order, and who then stood excommunicated for adhering to the Emperor Frederick II., an enemy of the Church, threw himself upon the ground, and lay there a long time, clinging to it with all his force. On being asked why he did so, he answered, that as Elias fell for having been too much elevated, he wished, if possible, to lower himself to the very centre of the earth.

Abbot Mathois said: "The nearer a man draws towards God, the more he perceives himself to be a sinner." Thus when the Prophet Isaias saw the Lord, he immediately exclaimed: "Wo is me, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I have seen with my own eyes the King, the Lord of Hosts."

St. Philip had arrived to such a height of perfection in humility, that he unaffectedly believed himself to be the greatest sinner in the world; and, when he said this, it was with so much feeling that no one could doubt for a moment its coming from the heart. This impression was so strong upon him, that if he heard of any one having committed a serious crime, he would say: "Thank God, that I have not done worse." On this account he used to read very often, and always with great emotion, the life of St. Mary of Egypt; for he desired to imitate her in her spirit of penance, although he had not imitated her in her sins. Every day he used to make a protest to God with the Blessed Sacrament in his hand, saying: "Lord! beware of me to-day, lest I should betray You, and do You all the mischief in the world." At other times he would say: "The wound in Christ's side is large, but if God did not guard me, I should make it larger." And when he was just going to communicate, he would say: "Lord, I protest before Thee, that I am good for nothing but to do evil." He used to say that his only preparation for Mass was to present himself to God as one who was ready, so far as he was concerned, to be guilty of any and every evil, if God did not assist him. Earlier in life, when he was ill, he used to say: "If God gives me my health back again, I wish to change my life, and

begin to do good;" but in his last illness, when he had acquired a greater knowledge of his own nothingness, he said quite the contrary: "Lord, if I recover, so far as I am concerned, I shall do more evil than ever, because I have promised so many times before to change my life, and have not kept my word, so that I despair of myself." He thought that God would punish him for his sins; so that when he was ill he used to say that God had sent him that sickness to convert him. At confession he would shed abundance of tears, and say: "I have never done one good action;" and even out of confession, he was so penetrated with this thought, that when he saw young persons, he set to work to consider how much time they had before them to do good in, and said: "O happy you! O happy you! who have time to do good, which I have not done." When he saw religious, he often broke out into such exclamations as these: "O happy you! who have left the world, which I should never have the heart to do."

St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi was so intimately penetrated with the sense of her own corruption and sinfulness, that she often besought the sisters to tell her her failings, and when sometimes the nuns, to satisfy her desire, said that she had such and such a fault, she gave full credit to all they said, though it was not true, and humbled herself greatly, without making any excuse, feeling sure that she had that fault, but could not see it for want of light. So great a sinner did she always consider herself, that when she was dying, after having received the holy oil, she said she firmly believed that God was removing her from the world that He might not have to send a chastisement for her sins, and that she should not wonder

at any great punishment which God might send on the world for her sins. One of her daughters having asked how she had arrived at so low an opinion of herself, when God had endowed her with such rare gifts, she replied: "I wonder at your stupidity in this. Know that if God had not favoured me with particular gifts, and in this way almost held me back, I should have plunged into the greatest offences which can be committed against His Divine Majesty. He has not done this to you because you obey His voice, and can serve Him without these particular gifts, and I am therefore more wretched than all of you." When she said that she feared the earth would swallow her up, on being asked by the mothers if that were her real feeling, she replied: "I feel, and have cause to feel it, because if I have not committed sins which would deprive me of the grace of God, it is because God has restrained me, and removed the occasions; and if others had had the same blessings and opportunities of doing good which I have had, they would not have offended Him, but, on the contrary, would have honoured Him more than I." When she heard any one say, "The crucifix is enough for me," she would say, "I find it difficult to go to the crucifix without the medium of humiliation before creatures." Being once asked by a sister whether so many graces received from God had never given her an occasion of vain-glory, she replied: "Do you not know that no one can derive glory from what is not his own? How, then, would you have me feel any vain-glory in the favours derived from God, since they are all His?"

FIFTEENTH DAY.

"The princes of the Gentiles lord it over them, and they that are the greater exercise power over them. It shall not be so among you, but whoever will be the greater among you, let him be your minister; and he that will be first among you, shall be your servant. Even as the Son of Man is not come to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a redemption for many."(a)—*Our Divine Saviour.*

"Think not that thou hast advanced one step in the path of holiness, if thou considerest not thyself as less than all."—*Blessed Valfre.*

St. Jane Frances used to say that there is nothing more calculated to secure the prosperity and good success of religious communities than the spirit of deep and solid humility on the part of those who have the charge of governing them. She wrote at various times to some newly elected superioresses, who dreaded the burden of the superiority, that if they were humble, they would be sufficiently strong. Among other things she wrote to them in the last months of her life, that if a dry stick had the power of humbling and annihilating itself before God, and was elected as superior, God would rather give it sense and intelligence than disdain to govern well by means of it, and that superiors would never be deficient in governing unless they were deficient in humility. When she wrote to the superioresses and sisters who were going to found a new house, she invariably recommended them to establish their government in humility, and said that, like foundation stones, they ought to place themselves so low by humility, that they would not be able to find themselves again in order to ascend. "Blessed

(a) St. Matt. xx. 25—28.

are the souls," she wrote to one of the sisters, " who descend so low in the abyss of humility, that they lose sight of the earth. God blesses such souls in their government and their enterprises."

The blessed Nicolas Fattore had arrived to such a height of humility, that even when he was master of novices, he contrived every means to put himself under the feet of all. For this purpose he constituted one of the novices superior over him, often going to him to accuse himself of some fault, a fault which could only seem such to his heroic humility, after which the novice was to impose a penance.

When he was in company with the other religious, either in the choir, refectory, chapter, or elsewhere, he felt a sort of inward dread, looking upon himself as another Judas in the midst of his holy brethren; he sincerely believed himself to be unworthy to wear the habit of St. Francis, and that he was the dishonour and opprobrium, not only of the whole order, but also of the whole human race.

Whilst he was guardian, he had five young religious to present for ordination: on the way they met with some poor people, when, turning to his young religious, he said: " Brothers, these are the representatives of Jesus Christ; let us humble ourselves before them by kissing their feet." They did so, he setting the example.

As he was once walking barefooted and bareheaded towards the city of Segarbe, he met a gentleman on horseback who was well acquainted with the father and his exalted virtue. Seeing him with his companion, bathed in perspiration and covered with dust, he dismounted and earnestly

entreated him, for the love of God, to mount his horse, and so spare himself a little of the fatigue to which he exposed himself; adding that it was too bad of him to hazard a life on which the spiritual welfare of so many people in Spain depended. Blessed Nicolas was horrified at these words; he threw himself flat upon his back on the ground, beseeching the gentleman and his companion to beat him on the mouth, because he was the greatest sinner in the world.

The gentleman, who was much edified by his humility, was obliged to let him pursue his journey barefooted and bareheaded, as the only means of inducing him to rise. A person, who had a great regard for him, happened one day to allude to something done by Nicolas, to the advantage and edification of many; seeing that his remarks were displeasing to the holy man, cautious and moderate as they were, he adroitly changed his style, adding that God alone is the author of all good, and that to Him alone was due the edification and spiritual profit effected by Father Fattore; that God often promotes the good of others by means of the wicked, and that Father Fattore might be one of this stamp; indeed, he strongly suspected that instead of being a saint, he was, in fact, a hypocrite and impostor; but that the Lord knows how to turn the mistakes and scandals of sinners into means of promoting the salvation of His elect. He concluded by saying, that he wished Father Nicolas every good; but to tell him sincerely his opinion of him, it was that he was just good for nothing, and unworthy of the bread he ate. The holy man showed himself highly pleased with these remarks, and was more cordial than ever with his worthy friend.

A religious, whose room was contiguous to that of blessed Nicolas, heard him enter his cell sighing and groaning, as if in extraordinary distress. He went to him, and inquired the cause of his anguish. Drawing a deep sigh from the very bottom of his heart, he answered that he had a great desire to please God, and to serve His Divine Majesty with that clear purity of heart which a son of Saint Francis ought to have, but that he had nothing of that sort, and was moreover so blind that he could not see his own failings; hereupon, he fell into an ecstacy, and began to speak of God with such fervour and sweetness, that the said religious, and many others who had gathered round him, were moved to tears of devotion. It is possible that our Lord on this occasion permitted him to see his own extraordinary purity of conscience, and that this consolatory sight was the cause of his ecstatic joy in the Lord.

Frequently did he collect his novices around him, and then with deep shame and grief, he told them that he was a great hypocrite, who by his deceit imposed on his religious brethren and on the world; that under specious appearances, he in reality transgressed all the constitutions and rules of the order, and that if men did but know his sins, they would abhor and execrate him as they would a fiend from hell.

It is related in the lives of the Fathers of the Desert, that one of the brethren seeing some grievous wounds on the hands of brother Zacheus, entreated him to consider his illness, and to spare himself. Zacheus answered, that he could not possibly think of living without working. "Well," said the other, "if you are fixed in your resolution of continuing to work, at least anoint your

hands with oil, to prevent the loss of so much blood." Zacheus followed his advice, but instead of finding any ease by the application of the oil to his wounded hands, the pain increased to such a degree as to become quite insupportable. St. Pachomius came to visit him on the occasion, and treating him as one that stood not in need of milk, but was capable of digesting the strongest diet, reprehended him for having sought this assuagement of pains, which God had sent him for his profit, and not having resigned himself wholly to Him, but rather trusted in this visible medicine than in the living God. Zacheus made no apology for himself, but meekly answered: "Forgive me, reverend father, and pray to the Lord for me, that He may vouchsafe in His mercy to remit me this sin also, together with all my other sins."

St. Pachomius used to direct such as were afflicted, or oppressed with sadness to this holy man; for he had a wonderful talent of administering comfort to all that were in trouble or affliction of mind. He continued his labours and conflicts to the end, when, in a good old age, he passed from temporal sorrows, to eternal joys.

SIXTEENTH DAY.

"The greater thou art, the more humble thyself in all things, and thou shalt find grace before God."(a)—*The Wise Man.*

"Be not proud of thy own works; for the judgments of God are different from the judgments of men; and oftentimes that displeaseth Him which pleaseth men. If thou hast anything of good, believe better things of others, that thou mayest preserve humility. It will do thee no harm to esteem thyself the worst of all; but it will hurt thee very much to prefer thyself before any one."—*Thomas à Kempis.*

It is related of St. Thomas of Villanova, that he was always anxious to be first to undertake the most vile and abject occupations in the monastery, endeavouring to anticipate the wishes and requests of those who needed his assistance.

On his election to the office of provincial, he began at once to consider, that as his power and authority increased, so ought his virtue also. "For," said he, "as I am greater and more elevated in station, I ought to be more humble, holy, merciful, devout, and given to prayer, since I have more need than ever of the assistance of God's Holy Spirit, that it may please Him to enlighten me in the discharge of an office on which depends the good or evil, both spiritual and temporal, of the whole province."

After St. Thomas became archbishop, he never lost a particle of that humility which he was accustomed to practise in the cloister. One day when he was on important business with the Bishops of Tartosa and Segovia, an uncle of his arrived at his house, with a linen apron hung from his neck, after the fashion of the peasants

(a) Eccli. iii. 20.

of Castile. The holy archbishop showed much joy at seeing him, and saluted him warmly in the presence of his company. "You are welcome, uncle," said he. "Be seated. Their lordships will excuse my asking news of my mother and relations." He spoke to him with so much sweetness and affability, that the spectators were not less edified than surprised with his holy simplicity. Then he called his steward, to entrust him to his care, saying: "Go and rest yourself, uncle; as soon as I have finished here, you shall see me." Then turning towards the bishops, he told them that this was his uncle, and brother of his mother. Another time a cousin-german came to Valentia, not so much to see and visit the archbishop, as to obtain from him a sum of money. He received this cousin with the same affability and kindly welcome, and kept him nearly a month in his house, and then inquired into the state of his affairs. "They are bad enough," replied the man; "since of two oxen that I possessed one is dead, so that I am obliged to stop my work." "Ah, well!" said the saint, "I will give you enough to buy another, not in the consideration of my relationship, but to assist you in the extremity of your affairs. I give this on condition you ask nothing more of me, because what I have is not my own. Nor have I any right to enrich my relations with it, but it is entrusted to my care to help the poor."

We read a similar thing of that great apostle of charity, St. Vincent of Paul. One day when the holy man was in his room, the porter came and announced to him that there was a countryman below, who called himself his nephew, and desired to speak with him. Vincent at first begged

one of his companions to go and receive this relation ; but he overcame himself on the spot ; he even went into the street where his nephew had remained, he embraced him tenderly, took him by the hand, and having introduced him into the house, he called all the priests, and told them that he was the best man of his family. He did still more ; he presented this poor relation to all the respectable persons who came to visit him. So complete a victory over the demon of pride did not appear to him sufficient, and during the first retreat which he made with his company, he accused himself publicly of having so much pride as to wish to introduce his nephew secretly into his room, because he was a countryman and badly dressed.

This sentiment of sincere and profound humility was common to all the saints, who, though enriched with the gifts of Heaven, raised to the top of perfections, esteemed and honoured by every one, looked nevertheless upon themselves as despicable in the sight of God, and remained always steadfast in the knowledge of their own empty and mean condition. Applause and honours raised in them no vain thoughts, because they knew how to distinguish what did, and what did not belong to them ;—looking upon the favours which were heaped upon them, and the honour and respects which were paid them, as things received from God, they gave Him all the glory ; and considering, at the same time, that they neither had, or could do anything, they humbled themselves before Him, under the sense of their own meanness. Thence it was, that although they saw themselves honoured and respected, it made no impression upon them ; they did not here-

upon set a higher value and esteem upon themselves; nay, on the contrary, they looked upon the honours which were given them, as not directed to them, but to God, Whom they belonged to; and in His glory they placed all their joy and content.

This is the humility which St. Chrysostom and St. Bernard admired particularly in the Apostles, and several other great saints, who, being replenished with the gifts of God, raised the dead, and worked daily an infinity of other miracles, which caused them to be esteemed by every one, yet preserved in the midst of all the honours done them, as deep a sense of their own meanness, as if they had had none of those advantages at all; and as if another had been the instrument of what they did; or as if the honours which were given them had been given to others.

St. Dorotheus says, that when trees are much loaded with fruit, the quantity weighs down, nay, sometimes breaks the branches; whereas, those which are not so laden remain straight—and when the ears of corn are full, they hang down, so that the stalk seems ready to break; but when they stand up, it is a sign that there is little in them. Just so it is as to spiritual things. They who bear no fruit continually shoot upwards, but they who are laden with the fruit of grace and good works are always hanging down their heads, in an humble posture; they make the favours they have received from God a subject of further humiliation and fear.

St. Gregory says, that as a man who has borrowed a great sum, feels his joy at having the money allayed by the obligation he lies under to restore it, and by the disquiet he is in, not know-

ing whether he shall be able to pay it at the time appointed; so the more gifts the humble man receives from Almighty God, the more he acknowledges himself a debtor, and the stricter he feels his obligation to serve Him; and believing that his gratitude and services correspond not as they ought to the greatness of the favours and benefits he has received, he thinks that any one but himself would have made better use of them. And this it is which makes the servants of God more humble than all others; for they know that God will call them to account, not only for the sins they shall commit, but also for the benefits they shall receive. *That much shall be required of him to whom much has been given; and to whom much has been entrusted, more shall be required and demanded.* St. Macharius was accustomed to say, that the humble man looked upon the gifts of God on himself, as a man does upon things that are deposited in his hands; or as a faithful treasurer looks upon the money which he has in his keeping. So far is he from being proud, that he is in continual fear of it; because he knows that it is money which he must give an account of, and that if he loses it by his fault, the loss will fall upon his own head.

The holy Abbot Zozimus once said before a certain philosopher, *that he believed himself the greatest sinner in the world;* and being asked by him, *how he could have so bad an opinion of himself, since he knew very well that he observed God's commands: All that I can tell you,* answered he, *is that I know that I speak truth, and that I am very sensible of what I say; ask me therefore no more.*

SEVENTEENTH DAY.

"He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord, for not he who commendeth himself is approved, but he whom God commendeth."(a) —*The Apostle St. Paul.*

"A man ought never to say one word in his own praise, however true it may be; whenever we do a good work, and somebody else takes the credit of it, we ought to rejoice and acknowledge it as a gift from God. Any how, we ought not to be sorry, because if others diminish our glory before men, we shall recover it with greater honour before God. Let us pray God, that if He give us any virtue and any gift, He will be pleased to keep it hidden even from ourselves, that we may preserve our humility, and not take occasion of pride on account of it."—*St. Philip.*

In the life of St. Arsenius, who had been preceptor to Arcadius and Honorius, sons of the Emperor Theodosius, and emperors themselves after his death, we read, that notwithstanding the rank he had held in the world, and the great esteem in which he was held for his learning, when he had made himself a religious he was never heard to say anything which seemed haughty, or showed any learning he possessed. On the contrary, he lived and conversed with all the other religious with such a spirit of simplicity and humility, that it seemed he had never known anything; and he addressed himself usually to the most simple, to learn of them a spiritual life; saying, that he deserved not to be their scholar in so elevated a science.

We read of the blessed Claver, that his address in concealing his virtues, especially his humility, was as wonderful as his humility itself. As he chose the time of night for his extraordinary penances and prayers, it often happened that the

(a) 2 Cor. x. 17, 18.

rector of the college, who went to confession to him, interrupted him in those moments when he expected to be alone, and found him occupied either in his austerities, or immersed in profound contemplation and ecstacy. The humble servant of God, confused at being caught in this condition, could not help complaining to the superior, and begged him to take some other time, or choose another confessor. To all that he did that was extraordinary, he continued to give a turn that was most likely to degrade him in general opinion. If his zeal and activity for the glory of God and salvation of souls happened to be commended, he would candidly say: "It ought to be so, but there is nothing but self-love in it; it is the effect of my ardent, impetuous temper, which without these occupations would be disturbed and become insupportable to others and to myself." If any one expressed surprise at his finding pleasure in conversing with the negroes and other low people, he ascribed it to a secret pride, saying that the poor and idiots were less likely than others to detect his weakness and ignorance. If his prodigious mortification, which led him to dress and kiss the most loathsome sores, was spoken of, he treated the whole affair as a jest, saying with a laugh: "Oh well, if being a saint consists in having no taste, and in having a strong stomach, why, I own, I may be one."

Amongst the many holy inhabitants of the Egyptian deserts, there was an ancient anchoret, named Agatho, who was much admired for his extraordinary patience and humility. Some of the brethren, with the design of putting his virtue to the trial, went to his cell, and complained of the scandal his pride and self-conceit had given, by his

contempt of others, setting them at nought and taking the liberty to censure and detract them; "And all this," said they, "because being yourself vicious and given to lewdness, you think to disguise your own vices by charging them upon others." The holy man heard all they said without discovering the least emotion or disturbance of soul, or denying any part of the charge; on the contrary, casting himself at their feet, he confessed himself to be a most grievous sinner, and begged they would be so charitable as to intercede to our Lord for a poor miserable wretch, loaded as he was with so many crimes, to the end that he might obtain mercy and forgiveness for them, through the assistance of their prayers.

There was in a certain monastery of Egypt a monk, named Eulalius, endued in an extraordinary degree with the grace of humility. As there were not wanting in that numerous community several lukewarm brethren, who had been guilty of frequent faults and negligences, they were accustomed to lay all upon Eulalius, whom they found ever ready to bear the blame. On these occasions the superiors often took him to task, whilst he, instead of pleading not guilty, prostrated himself before them and begged pardon for his faults and negligences. The rule of the monastery enjoined penances for these faults, which he cheerfully underwent, even sometimes passing two or three days together without eating. But as fresh accusations still were brought against him, the ancient religious, who were ignorant that he endured all this for the sake of Christ, and for the exercise of his patience and humility, represented to the abbot, that as they found no amendment in Eulalius, it became necessary to think of taking some other

course with him, since by his negligence most of the utensils of the house were destroyed; and that there would be no keeping anything whole in the monastery, so long as he remained amongst them. The abbot desired some time to consider the matter, and in the mean time, while begging light from Heaven to direct him, he learned from God in prayer the extraordinary merit, patience and humility, of Eulalius, which His Divine Majesty was also pleased, not long after, to declare by a miracle, in the presence of all the religious. Upon this the brethren began to esteem him as a saint, and to honour and praise him as such on all occasions, which became so sensible a mortification to this humble servant of God, that he heavily complained of his misfortune in having now lost, as he said, the treasure of humility, which, by the grace of Christ, he had for so long a time been endeavouring to acquire. At length to escape all this honour and esteem, he withdrew privately by night from the monastery into a desert, where he might be unknown to all men. There he chose a lonesome cave for his habitation, in which he spent the remainder of the days of his mortality, in order to guard his humility from those dangers to which it was exposed in the midst of applause and esteem.

EIGHTEENTH DAY.

"If any man think himself to be something, whereas he is nothing, he deceiveth himself."(a)—*The Apostle St. Paul.*

"The highest degree of humility is not only to acknowledge willingly our own abjection, but to love it and take delight in it; and this, not from meanness of soul, or cowardice of heart, but from a desire to exalt, as we ought, the Divine Majesty, and to prefer others far before ourselves."—*St. Francis of Sales.*

It was in this particular degree of humility that the venerable Benedict Labré found his greatest delight. The love of his own abjection induced him to appear most miserably dressed in the public streets. And when on this account he was made the butt of the insolence of boys, he interiorly rejoiced, at seeing himself mocked in this manner, like our Blessed Redeemer. "O my God! how much do Thy servants suffer; how much do they perform, and how greatly do they desire to resemble Thee our Redeemer! And I do not know how to bear even the prick of a needle. . . . or one little word!"

It is related of the celebrated Silvanus, that from the time of his conversion he was touched with so lively a sense of his sins, and such deep compunction for them, as not only entirely to refrain for ever from his former faults, and begin to lead a new life of great edification to the rest of his brethren, but also in every place, and in all his occupations to be continually weeping and lamenting so bitterly his past crimes, that he could not refrain from sobbing and mourning even whilst he was taking his meal with the other religious. When his brethren desired him not to afflict him-

(a) Gal. vi. 3.

self to such an excessive degree, since it became troublesome to them, but rather to restrain these outward tokens of grief, which were no way necessary even to the most perfect compunction, the true seat of which dwelt within, in the heart; he answered that he would gladly obey them, and accordingly made all the efforts he could to refrain from them, but he found a certain flame burning within his breast, that would not suffer him to be quiet. "But," said they, "what subject or occasion is there for all these floods of tears?" "Ah!" said he, "how can I help weeping, when I see so many holy brethren, the dust of whose feet I ought to venerate, so charitable as to take notice of me? When I see a wretch that has come from the play-house, quite laden with sins, receive so many good offices! Alas! I have reason to fear lest the earth should open under my feet, and swallow me down, as it did Dathan and Abiron, in punishment of my having profaned all that was sacred, after so clear a knowledge and experience of Divine grace, by leading so slothful and wicked a life. Wonder not at my weeping. Oh! my brethren, I have just reason to labour to wash away my innumerable sins with ever flowing fountains of tears, and if I could entirely pour forth my wretched soul in mourning, it would be all too little to punish my crimes."

The following sentences which were found in the writings of the venerable John Berchmans, show how much he was penetrated with the feeling of his own abjection: "The idea," says he, "which more frequently comes to my mind, and gives me the greatest consolation, is to consider all my brothers as my superiors, and myself prostrate at their feet: the honour of living among

them is a favour of which I am wholly unworthy, and I am equally surprised at my own presumption in asking it. Being in myself only nothingness and sin, I must esteem myself unworthy of all honour, on account of the first, and deserving of all contempt, on account of the second : this must be the rule of my self-valuation, and if my justice in this respect be true and sincere, I shall be glad that others have the same opinion of me : to be humble only in my own eyes is to be humble by halves ; but to be humbled in the eyes of others is true humility. The desire I have for humiliations is the real measure of my humility : if I seek to avoid the former, I have no sincere affection for the latter ; and if I have but little love for this virtue, which is the foundation of all sanctity, it must follow, as a necessary consequence, that I have no real intention to become a saint. We shall never attain to this humiliation, so precious in the sight of God, unless we are deeply impressed with this conviction :—Of myself I have nothing, and the mere weight of nature would again reduce me to nothing, if the hand of my Creator did not sustain me. If, of myself, I have anything beyond this nothing, it is another weight which draws me to sin, and which would occasion a thousand dangerous falls, if the hand of my Redeemer did not support me. Behold here the root of my self-contempt, the fruit of it must be to seek my own abasement on every occasion."

Cassian relates that a holy old man, called Pinuphius, wishing to shun the respect and honour which were given him in the monastery where he presided, resolved to go away, and retire to some place where he might live neglected, and without being at all taken notice of. To this end

he privately left his own convent, and knowing that in the part where St. Pacomius lived, which was a great way off, discipline and zeal did then most flourish, he in secular habit went thither, so that not being known there, he might be treated as a novice, and no regard had of him. Several days he stayed there at the gate, asking with all humility the habit, and prostrating himself at the feet of the monks; who on purpose showed a contempt for him, reproaching him that after being glutted with the world, he came to give himself to God in his old age; and that it was more out of necessity and to be sure of a livelihood, than to serve God by his own choice and inclination, that he begged admission. He was nevertheless at last received, and made under-gardener to another brother, whom he was to obey in all things. And he not only did his duty herein, with great exactness and humility, but he endeavoured moreover to do the most troublesome labour of all the house, and that to which others had the greatest aversion. In the night he rose privately, as if he had not worked enough during the day, and put everything he could in order without being perceived; so that the religious, who knew not how or by whom all that was done, were hereby every morning in a very great surprise. Three years he remained in that condition, very well content with the opportunity he had to work, and to render himself contemptible, which was the thing he so much desired. His own religious, much troubled, in the mean time, at his absence, inquired after him in several places, and at the end of three years, when they despaired of finding him, one of them passing by the monastery of St. Pacomius, little thinking of meeting him there whom they sought after,

found him spreading dung on the ground; so that, knowing him very well, he threw himself presently at his feet, to the great wonder of all present; but when they learned who he was, their wonder increased, for they knew him well enough by fame, and begged his pardon for using him as they had done so long a time. The good old man, bewailing his misfortune in thus being discovered through the envy of the devil, and losing the treasure he had found in the obscurity of a private life, was forced to return to his own monastery, where being received with great joy by all the religious, they took great care that he should not get away from them any more. But their precaution was to no purpose, for he had still so great a desire of becoming very contemptible, and was so taken with the pleasure he found during the three years he had passed in an humble and private way of living, that having taken measures privately to get on board a ship, which was bound for Palestine, he found means to steal away once more from his monastery, and embarked. But God, Who takes upon Himself the care of exalting the humble, permitted him, when he arrived at the monastery where Cassian was, to be known by some of the religious who went thither to visit the Holy Land, and thus what he did to render himself contemptible, served only to make him the more esteemed and respected.

It is related in the "Spiritual Meadow," that a holy bishop having left his bishopric, where he was much esteemed and honoured by every body, went his way to Jerusalem, where he was not known, and having put on poor clothes, took upon him to serve a mason. It happened during this period, that a good man, called Ephraim, who

was superintendent of all the public buildings, went to oversee them two or three times when the workmen reposed; and having all these times beheld upon the head of the holy old man, who slept upon the ground, a pillar of fire, which seemed to reach up to heaven, he was surprised, and the more so because he saw the old man in a very miserable condition and employment. To inform himself of the cause, he called him, and asked him who he was? The saint answered, that he was a poor man who got his livelihood by labour. Ephraim was not satisfied with this answer, but by a secret inspiration of God, Who permitted it should be thus, the more to honour the humility of His servant, pressed him again with so much earnestness to tell him who he was, that the holy man, unable to deny himself any longer, replied: "I will tell upon condition that you will never speak of it to any body whilst I am alive, nor ask my name." The superintendent consented, and hereupon gave him his word. The saint then owned that he was a bishop, and that to shun the esteem and honour of the world he had quitted his bishopric.

NINETEENTH DAY.

"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man. He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross."(a)—*The Apostle St. Paul.*

"A truly humble man desires contempt, and without seeking to appear humble, he seeks to appear deserving of humiliation. He submits to every one. He wishes that every one may despise and ill-treat him, and that those who make him suffer may believe that he suffers, not because he is humble, but because he is most wretched. Therefore when we are treated with contempt, we ought to wish that others may really think we are extremely confounded and afflicted at being ill-used, whilst in reality in our inmost heart we are quite delighted at it, and this from a principle of holy hatred to ourselves which we ought to have."—*Blessed Claver.*

THERE is nothing which is more calculated to infuse into our souls a true love of humiliation and contempt, than to consider attentively the humiliations and reproaches which our Divine Saviour endured for our sake. He, the Lord of heaven and earth, was not content with humbling Himself so far as to make Himself man, and take the form of a servant, but He even clothed Himself with the form of a sinner, and appeared, as the Apostle says, *in the likeness of sinful flesh*. He took not sin upon Him, because sin is incompatible with God, but He took the mask and character of sinners: being pleased to be circumcised as a sinner; to be baptized among sinners and publicans, as if He had been one of them; to be put in competition with Barabbas, and judged more wicked and more unworthy to live than he. In

(a) Philip. ii. 5—8.

fine, the eagerness which He had to suffer all sorts of affronts and reproaches for the love of us, was so excessively great, that He thought it long till He saw the time wherein, inebriated with love, He was to be put to a most painful and ignominious death. *I have*, says He, *a baptism of blood to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished?* (a) He thought it long, I say, to see the hour wherein He was to be abandoned to all sorts of indignities—to be buffeted as a slave—to be spit upon as a blasphemer—to be clothed in white, as a fool; and with purple, as a mock king; and more than all this, to be cruelly scourged like a public robber; and, in fine, to suffer, between two thieves, the most shameful and ignominious death. This is what the Divine Saviour of souls desired so earnestly. He loved reproach and ignominy so much, that He longed for them with the same impatience that others do for the things which are most pleasing. And therefore Jeremiah, speaking of Him, says, *He shall be satiated with reproaches*, (b) to show us by this expression the violent hunger and thirst which He had, to endure all sorts of contempt and affronts, for the love of us. Now, if for love of us, the Son of God, so worthy of all veneration, so ardently desired and so joyfully received scorns and affronts, shall we think that we do much, who deserve all manner of contempt, when we wish for the love of Him, to pass at least for what we really are, and to suffer with pleasure the reproaches and affronts we deserve? The Apostle experienced this joy when he said, *Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in*

(a) Luke xii. 50. (b) Lamen. iii. 30.

persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake.(a) And it is in the same spirit that, writing from the place of his imprisonment to the Philippians, and not being able to contain the satisfaction he felt at suffering for Jesus Christ, he tells them, that it is just that they should share in his joy. It is with this milk that the Saviour of the world nourished His Apostles, and this was the cause, that when they were beaten with rods by the command of the synagogue, they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer contempt for His Name. (b) And it is this which several martyrs have imitated; and among others, St. Ignatius, who being brought to Rome to be exposed to the wild beasts, and seeing himself loaded with all manner of affronts and reproaches by those who led him, cried out joyfully: *I begin now to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.*

It is related in the lives of the Fathers of the Desert, that a certain lady of the first quality, after visiting the holy places and performing other devotions in Jerusalem, went to Cæsarea, to fix her abode in that city. Here she desired the bishop to place some religious woman with her, who might teach her humility and the fear of God. The bishop made choice of a virtuous, humble maid, whom he recommended to her for that purpose. After some time he asked her how she liked the companion he had placed with her. "She is good," said she, "but is no great service to my soul, for she is so exceedingly humble that she lets me do whatever I please, and never contradicts me." Upon this the bishop sent a woman

(a) 2 Cor. xii. 10. (b) Acts v. 41.

of a more rough and untowardly disposition to her, who failed not to afford the good lady frequent opportunities of exercising her patience, as well as her humility and charity, in bearing with her sour temper, her unruly tongue, her perpetual contradictions and reproaches. After some time the bishop again desired to know how she liked her companion. She answered that she had reason to be contented with her, because she was of essential service to her soul, by teaching her patience, meekness and humility, which are best learned in the school of reproaches and contradictions.

It is recorded in the life of the blessed Claver, that he loved humiliation and contempt for the sake of Jesus no less than worldlings long after human honour and glory. However well calculated by the elegance of his mind, by the power of his talents, and by his well-proved capacity to discharge the most important functions, either in the pulpit or in the schools, or even in domestic government, he always confined himself to his first employ amongst the negroes, the poor and the sick, nor did it ever occur to him that he was fit for anything else. To see him in this humble ministry, he would have been taken for an illiterate man of no capacity, whose whole merit was limited to those sort of functions. Indeed, how far did not his humility lead him, who could thus bury in the obscurity of hospitals, prisons and cabins, so many varied talents? If consulted on any important affairs, or a difficult case of conscience, he used to answer, shrugging his shoulders: "Those matters are too deep for me; you had better apply to some other father, more able and learned than I am."

When any person of distinction wished to see him, it was necessary to use artifice in order to draw him into the house, by pretending that some negro or sick person wanted him; but as soon as he found out the trick, he affected ignorance and simplicity, so that when he was asked to speak of holy things, he answered: "Here is one who can do this much better than I can;" whereupon he would ask his companion to make a little exhortation to the family, whilst he went off in search of the poor slaves to catechise them.

A certain father, who greatly desired to perfect himself in humility, begged St. Ignatius would show him the shortest method. "This is the way," he said: "do the exact contrary to what men of the world do; hate what they seek after, and seek for what they hate." This doctrine was impressed upon all who sought admittance into the society, and he thus prescribes the method to be adopted in their examination:—"It is convenient that those who are examined, observe diligently the great help and advantage of a spiritual life, of hating both in whole and part those things which the world loves and embraces, and of seeking and loving with all the heart what was loved and embraced by our Lord Jesus Christ. For as men of the world love and pursue honours, fame, and a great name on the earth, according to the teaching of the world which they follow, so on the other hand they who are guided by the spirit, and who follow the Lord Jesus Christ, love and ardently desire the exact contrary of these, and to clothe themselves in the livery of their Master, out of their love and reverence for Him; thus when they can do so without offence to His Divine Majesty or injury to their neighbour, they are

willing to bear shame, false witness, injuries, and to be considered as fools (whilst they still give no occasion for such judgment), because they desire in every way to resemble and imitate their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and to wear those same garments which He wore for our assistance and for our example; in order that by the Divine grace, they may, so far as is possible, follow and imitate Him who is the true way which leadeth to eternal life.

TWENTIETH DAY.

"The just is first accuser of himself."(a)—*The Wise Man.*

"He who knows himself well, is mean in his own eyes, and is not delighted by being praised by men. If thou wouldst know and learn anything to the purpose, love to be unknown, and esteemed as nothing. This is the highest and most profitable lesson, truly to know and to despise ourselves. To have no opinion of ourselves, and to think always well and commendably of others, is great wisdom and high perfection. If thou shouldst see another openly sin, or commit some heinous crime, yet thou oughtest not to esteem thyself better, because thou knowest not how long thou mayest remain in a good state. We are all frail, but see thou think no one more frail than thyself."—*Thomas à Kempis.*

Albertus Magnus says, that he who will acquire humility, ought to plant the root of it in his heart, that is, he ought to make it his study, to find out his own weakness and misery, and to comprehend not only how weak and miserable he is, but to what a degree of weakness he would be reduced, did not God, through His infinite goodness, shield

(a) Prov. xviii. 17.

him from the occasions of sin; and help and succour him in temptations. Hence it is that holy men have sought to enter into such thoughts with so profound humility, that not content to be reckoned barely wicked, they have looked upon themselves as the greatest sinners upon the face of the earth. God raised St. Francis to so high a degree of perfection, and designed so eminent a seat of glory for him, that he one day showed the saint's companion, the place he had reserved for him in heaven, among the seraphim; yet the same religious asking the saint afterwards, what opinion he had of himself? *I think*, answered he, *that there is not in the world a greater sinner than myself.* St. Paul believed the same thing of himself; *Jesus Christ came into the world*, says he, *to save sinners, of which I am the chief.*(a) The Apostle deceives us not in this, says St. Augustine, nor teaches us flatteries when he writes to the Philippians, that every one of them should in humility esteem others better than themselves; and to the Romans also, that they should in honour prevent one another. It was not out of feigned humility, that the saints styled themselves the greatest sinners upon earth; it was because they really thought so; and when they recommend to us the practise of this exercise, it is because they wish us to think seriously that we are great sinners.

St. John Climachus says, that the devil, who seeks nothing but our destruction, endeavours to set continually our virtues and good actions before our eyes, that so he may make us proud; and that God, on the contrary, who desires only our

(a) 1 Tim. i. 15.

salvation, gives particular light to His elect, to make them perceive even the least of their imperfections; and hides the favours He bestows upon them in such a manner, that often they perceive not when they receive them. All holy writers teach the same doctrine; and St. Bernard says, that it is by a particular disposition of the Divine goodness, which is pleased to keep us humble, that the greater progress one ordinarily makes in perfection, the less he thinks he has made; for when any one has arrived to the highest degree of virtue, God permits that something of the perfection of the lowest should yet remain to be acquired, that he may not think he is advanced so far as he is. Thus the comparison, which is made between humility and the sun, is a very just one; for as the stars disappear, and hide themselves before the sun, so when humility shines truly in souls, all other virtues hide themselves before it in such a manner, that they who are humble indeed, seem to themselves to have no virtue at all. They are the only persons, says St. Gregory, who see not in themselves the exemplary virtues which all the world admires. When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, where he had forty days conversed with God face to face, his countenance shone so bright, that all the children of Israel, says the Scripture, beheld it, and he alone knew not that his face was shining because of the conversation he had had with the Lord. So it is with the humble man; he alone sees not his own virtues, and whatever he does see in himself appears full of imperfections; nay, he even thinks that he sees but the least part of his faults; and that those which he sees not are much more numerous; and thus can he easily look

upon himself as the least of all his brethren, and believe that he alone is the greatest sinner in the world.

When St. Francis of Assisium was one day pressed by his companion to tell him, how he could have so low an opinion and speak of himself as he did? I am, said the saint, fully convinced, that had the greatest sinner received the same favours that I have, he would have made better use of them than I have done; and on the contrary, I firmly believe, that did God withdraw His hand from me but one moment, I should fall into the most extravagant enormities in the world, and be the worst of men; therefore, do I look upon myself as the greatest and most ungrateful of sinners. This answer is very just, and flows from a great stock of humility, and at the same time, contains admirable doctrine. For it was thoughts of this kind that moved the saints to humble themselves, and to stoop to the very centre of the earth; and made them all fall down at every body's feet, and truly reckon themselves the greatest sinners. The knowledge of our own weakness, which is the root of humility, was so fixed in their hearts, that they easily distinguished what they were in themselves, from what they were by grace; wherefore considering, that if God had left them but one moment, they might have grown the greatest sinners, they always looked upon themselves as such; and upon the gifts of God, as borrowed favours, which instead of making them less humble, did, on the contrary, inspire them with a more profound sense thereof. Because they always thought, that they made not that use they ought of the benefits they had received; so that on whatever side they turned their eyes,

whether they cast them down, upon what they were of themselves, or lifted them up to behold what they had received from God, they always found occasion to humble and esteem themselves less than all others.

St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi, by the frequent consideration of her own miseries, conceived such a contempt of herself, that she avoided as much as possible all intercourse with distinguished personages, saying that she was unworthy to be named on the earth, much more to be known by such persons. One day the Duchess of Bracciano having come to speak to her at the grate, on the message being brought to her she said : " Oh ! if the Duchess of Bracciano knew that sister Mary Magdalen is the abomination of the monastery, she would be careful not to name her, much more to have her called."

Being told another time that she must go to the grate, for her Most Serene Highness the Duchess of Mantua was come to speak to her, she wept so much as to be quite inconsolable, saying : " I do not know why I should have to speak to such persons, who am only a nun like the rest." At another time the Most Serene Princess Maria de Medici, before she became Queen of France, wrote her a letter, begging some counsel and spiritual instructions ; on reading which the saint was greatly afflicted, even to weeping ; and when she saw that the prioress wished her to satisfy the princess, she said: " Mother Prioress, you wish me to be thought what I am not, and to go to hell for my pride ; and when I am in hell, these great people will not pull me out." As the princess in her letter expressed a wish to come and see her, she begged her not to do so, assuring her of her prayers

The same spirit of self-contempt shone conspicuously in blessed Claver. Tranquil and patient under all other circumstances, he never lost any of his ordinary mildness, unless some mark of esteem or respect were shown him. Having once given an alms to a poor woman, accompanying his little present with some salutary advice for the good of her soul, she, equally delighted with his charity and discourse, fell at his feet, exclaiming: "Ah! holy Father Claver, what is said at Lima is surely true, that God has pardoned Carthagena on your account." At these words the holy man was troubled and confounded: "Go!" said he with emotion, "You know not what you say; and if I ever hear that you circulate such absurdities, I will have you driven out of the city: beg God's pardon for your imprudence!" During the rest of that day he scarcely dared to raise his eyes: he hastened to the hospital to expiate, by some humiliations, the praises which his modesty transformed into a crime. This conduct will not appear surprising in a man who sincerely believed himself to be the most unworthy of sinners. As he was most attentive to the infinite grandeur and purity of God, so as soon as he cast his eyes on himself, he found nothing but impurities and miseries. This is what Father Claver has himself so well expressed in the following words: "The truly humble soul rises with all her might to God, whence she perceives His sanctity and His infinite love for man: then, re-entering into herself, she sees the immeasurable distance there is between Him and her; and by the favour of the Divine light which enlightens her, she discovers her own blemishes; just as the suns rays, passing through a window, enable us

to see the atoms which float through the air." "Take care," he would often say to himself, "and no longer abuse the graces of thy God, and be not amongst thy brethren like Judas amongst the apostles. Reflect that those who entered religion with thee, run with rapid strides in the ways of perfection, whilst thou art still ungrateful, still a sinner."

TWENTY-FIRST DAY.

"There is one that humbleth himself wickedly, and his interior is full of deceit."(a)—*The Wise Man.*

"We have known many, who, when no one accused them, have confessed themselves to be sinners; but when somehow they have been corrected for their faults, they immediately have recourse to self-defence, lest they should appear to be sinners. If they really thought that they were sinners, when of their own accord they said it, they would not have denied it when they were accused by others of being what they themselves confessed they were."—*St. Gregory.*

It is related in the lives of the Fathers of the Desert, that a certain brother came one day to visit the holy abbot Serapion. The holy abbot begged of him, according to the custom of the ancient religious in their visits, to give out the prayer which was to be made when they first met, which he refused, saying he was a poor sinner, and unworthy to wear the religious habit. In like manner, when the saint offered to wash his feet, according to the custom, he would not permit, still alleging his great unworthiness. The holy man, after having entertained him at

(a) Eccli. xix. 23.

table with what his poverty could afford, dismissed him with this charitable advice: "My son, if you desire to make due progress in religion, return to your cell, and there, attending to God and yourself, employ yourself in working with your hands, for coming abroad in this manner is not so good for you, as it would be to remain at home." The brother, on hearing these words, was so much disturbed and offended as to discover his displeasure and resentment by the change of his countenance, which the holy abbot observing, said to him: "A little while ago, you said that you were a poor sinner, and accused yourself as one who was not worthy to tread upon the earth: how comes it, then, that you are so much disturbed at the charitable admonition I have given you? If you have a real desire to be humble, you must learn to bear patiently the things that others lay upon you, and not be ever saying reproachful things of yourself which you would not be willing another should believe of you." The brother, having acknowledged his fault, departed highly edified with the lessons he received from the saint.

This sort of assumed and affected humility is not unfrequent amongst Christians, and even amongst those who think to lead a pious and virtuous life. "We frequently say," writes St. Francis of Sales, "that we are nothing, misery itself, and the refuse of the world; but we should be very sorry to be taken at our word, and spoken of in such terms by others. On the contrary, we affect to conceal ourselves that we may be sought after, and to retire that we may be brought forward; we pretend to wish to be the last, and to sit down in the lowest place at table, that we may be in-

vited to go up higher. True humility never affects to be such, nor makes use of lowly expressions of herself, for she desires not only to conceal all other virtues, but also and principally herself; and were it allowable to deceive, to dissemble or to scandalize her neighbour, she would appear arrogant and haughty, that she might not be known, but be completely hidden. My advice, therefore, is, that we should either not speak of ourselves in terms of humility, or act in a manner corresponding with our expressions: that we should never put on downcast looks, without really humbling our hearts; and that we should never affect to be the lowest, unless we sincerely desire to be such. The same thing is strongly recommended to us by St. Jerome in the following words: "Follow the true virtue of humility not that which is shown outwardly, or is put on by bodily gesture, or by a submissive tone of speech, but that which is expressed by the feelings of the heart. For it is one thing to have a virtue, and another to have the likeness of a virtue. It is one thing to follow the shadow of a thing, another to follow the thing itself. That pride is so much the more hideous, which is hidden under the cloak of humility.

The saints adhered so strictly to this rule that when it happened that they were undervalued or despised by men, they not only refrained from every sort of resentment, but bore it patiently and joyfully."

It is related of St. Ignatius, that whilst travelling betwen Venice and Padua, he met with a certain rough peasant keeping oxen, who seeing a dress which he considered so strange, began to laugh at him and mock him. Ignatius stopped

and quietly let the impudent boy go on till he was satisfied. James Lainez, who was with him, wished to induce him to go on his way, but Ignatius answered: "Do you think, James, that I ought to interrupt this little fellow's enjoyment at the sight of me?"

If he had been guided by the fervour of his zeal, this saint would have gone through Rome covered with mud and feathers, like an idiot. But he moderated such feelings for the sake of the good of others, except when he met with some opportunity of self-humiliation, which he embraced with joy. He taught his disciples that one act of real humility is of more advantage to souls than the appearance of worldly authority. For this purpose, he desired Alphonso Salmerour and Pascasio Broet, when they went as Nuncio to Pope Paul III. into Ireland, to give lessons in Christian doctrine to the ignorant and to children, and when the same Salmerour and Lainez were sent as the Pope's theologians to the Council of Trent, he gave them instructions to go straight to the hospitals as soon they arrived there, to wait upon the sick, and after having delivered their opinions in the council, they were to instruct children and ignorant persons in the rudiments of the faith. He desired to be forgotten by all men, or remembered only as something to be despised and abominated, and to be thrown as a stinking carcase on the dunghill to be devoured by dogs when he was dead.

We read of the blessed Fattore that on a certain occasion as he was walking with several companions, after saluting a cross which they met in the way, he encouraged his companions to keep silence; but after a brief interval, he resumed the

conversation on spiritual things. One of his companions, wishing to test his virtue, whispered in his ear: "You recommend silence to others, but do not observe it yourself: you deserve a good penance." The saint immediately knelt down, and with great humility and contrition acknowledged the fault he had committed in breaking silence, asked pardon for the scandal he had given, and begged that a suitable penance might be imposed upon him; they were all extremely edified, and had great difficulty in persuading him to rise from the ground.

TWENTY-SECOND DAY.

"Be humble in the sight of the Lord, and He will exalt you." (a) —*St. James.*

"In humiliations, reproofs and mortifications, the religious must be cheerful and calm, without excusing herself even when innocent of the fault reproved, believing humility to be the gate by which she is to enter Heaven, and that by its exercise, she can in some measure make satisfaction for her sins."—*St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi.*

In conformity to this maxim, the saint, when mistress of novices, used the greatest diligence to subdue their pride, and to ground them in true humility; and therefore exercised them in various mortifications, public and private, and by two words, she could make any one of them enter into herself, and detect her own imperfections and faults, as may be gathered from the following ex-

(a) St. James iv. 10.

amples. She sometimes called a novice from amongst the others, saying: "This child thinks we have had great luck in having her in our monastery, but I say that she has had great luck in our admitting her into our number." If she saw any one self-complacent or imagining that she had done anything well, she would, in that light of God which penetrated the heart, instantly expose a thousand imperfections in that work, so that she who was before vain-glorious and satisfied, was afterwards ashamed of having done it. If some were endowed with greater knowledge, sense, natural talents, or virtues than others, to keep them humble and secure them from human complacency, she employed them but little, and studiously seemed to make but small account of them, and to esteem them less than the rest. She humbled them in their actions, and did this in such a way that it could never enter their heads that this was done for their humiliation, since she clearly proved to them that their actions were imperfect and worthy of blame; and so acute were her reasonings, that they opened the intellect, and gave the mind light to discern the faults she pointed out.

A superioress of the convent of the Visitation at Nantes once wrote to St. Jane Frances, in all confidence, that there were many who censured her conduct for allowing herself to be called *worthy* mother: she received this notice with great joy, saying that the censures were perfectly right, and thanked the good mother heartily for her sincerity. But with incomparable sincerity she declared, that when she had had things written she had never paid attention as to whether she was called worthy or not. A few weeks after this

she received letters from others which were anything but civil, telling her that it gave great disedification that she allowed herself to be called worthy mother, and that she should efface this word in the writings of the institute. This truly holy mother read this letter with still greater pleasure, because it was very humiliating, and made the sisters write to all the communities of the institute, beseeching them not to call her so any more. She also took the trouble to have read to her the lives of the deceased mothers and sisters, as well as the "Book of Foundations," in order to efface this word worthy, ordering the sister who wrote them not to use the word again, telling her that common sense might have warned her, seeing that it was a shame to call her worthy, who was so unworthy. One of the superioresses wrote to her, through an excessive simplicity and confidence, saying that she thought that age had made her relax in that mortification which had formerly appeared in her. The saint made the sisters read this letter, three or four at a time, one after another; she also told the community that it was but too true that she had relaxed in her attention to her little acts of mortification, and that she wished to profit by this advice, thanking her who had given it her, with words full of tenderness, gratitude and love. On several occasions when the blessed mother or her relatives had been spoken ill of in the most cutting language, she never appeared to notice it, and told several that were in her confidence, that this contempt and abjection had been so very useful for her interior, that if she had not feared to confuse those who had rendered her this good office, she would have thanked them for it on bended knees.

On another occasion, a certain person wrote to the holy mother that she was much censured for not having arranged for the appointment of a superioress-general after her death, since she herself performed the functions of one, upon which she replied: "My very dear daughter, you may tell Jesus Christ that I have written to you, if I have done any actions that look like those of a superioress-general, they have originated in my pride, and the natural quickness of my temper, for I never thought of being superioress-general, and if I had such an idea, and wished to act as such, I should wish to be everywhere pointed at as vain and void of the spirit of truth."

This saint was so very careful to humble herself on every occasion, that the Rev. Father Binet, of the Society of Jesus, who had witnessed her great humility at Paris, said that he believed that she had been professed with four vows, and that the fourth was humility. On his inquiring if that vow was not made in the congregation: "My dear father," replied the blessed mother, with a sweet smile, "it is my desire that we should practise humility as exactly as if we had vowed it; knowing this, we join this precious virtue to those of the three vows."

Giving once a definition of what it was to be a daughter of the Visitation, she said: "To be a true daughter of the Visitation, is to esteem contempt, and to contemn honour." She added, that humility was the key of the treasures of God; that if the soul presents herself before Him without this key, she will obtain none of the treasures in the eternal coffers, but will be always wretched and poor. She once wrote to a superioress of the institute, that, except solid humility, all else was

nothing but shadows and mere phantoms of virtue. She often recommended humility in her letters and speeches, but only true humility, which makes us love to be reputed and treated as that which we know ourselves to be before God. She would not read the funeral oration on her brother, the late Archbishop of Bourges, because her relatives were praised, and she said to one of the sisters: "If you find anything devout, tell me when you have read it; but for the rest, I do not wish to hear of it."

TWENTY-THIRD DAY.

"God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world."(a)—*The Apostle St. Paul.*

"We must disregard the esteem of the world; it is at best but a bad judge, which often despises what ought to be esteemed, and esteems what deserves contempt."—*Venerable Berchmans.*

THERE are few, even amongst the saints, who have shown themselves such great enemies of the honour and esteem of the world, as St. Hilarion did. After he had retired into the desert, seeing that his hermitage was converted into a great monastery, and that the wilderness about him was continually crowded with people who resorted thither, bringing their diseased or such as were possessed with unclean spirits, and that not only the common sort of people, from all the neigh-

(a) Gal. vi. 14.

bouring provinces, but even the gentry, ladies of the first rank, clerics, monks, priests, and bishops were daily visiting him, interrupting his devotions; he bitterly regretted the loss of his former solitude, and was perpetually lamenting and weeping, saying, that since he had returned back into the world, he apprehended that he should have his reward in this life, because all Palestine and the neighbouring provinces took him to be somebody; nor did he cease to mourn and bewail his condition, till he took a fixed resolution to quit his monastery, and retire into some place where he might be unknown, and more freely enjoy his God without the interruption of so many visits.

When it was known abroad that the man of God was upon the point of quitting Palestine, the whole province took the alarm, and no less than ten thousand people, of all degrees and conditions were gathered together, in order to stop and detain him. At length he assured them he would neither eat nor drink until they let him go. And after he had fasted seven days he was permitted at last to depart, accompanied by about forty of his monks; after a long journey through the dreary wilderness, he arrived in the neighbourhood of the town called Aphroditon.

Here, in an adjoining desert, with two of his disciples, whom he kept with him; he led so abstemious, abstracted, and silent a life, that on feeling the fervour he now found within himself, he seemed never to have before begun to serve Christ in earnest. He had not been above two years in this wilderness, when the fame of his sanctity brought all the people of the neighbouring country to him, to beg his prayers for rain. Moved to pity by the sight of their distress, he lifted up

his eyes and hands to heaven, and his prayer was immediately followed by plentiful rains. But the rains, whilst they fertilized the earth, had, by falling on the dry hot sand, brought into life, at the same time, an incredible number of venemous reptiles and insects, which was so great an annoyance that they were again forced to have recourse to the saint, who gave them some oil which he had blessed, with which their wounds were cured. Finding himself after these miracles greatly honoured he would stay no longer in this place, but departed, that he might go and hide himself in the desert of Oasis. He had not been a year in the wilderness of Oasis, before he found that fame had also followed him thither; and despairing to be able to conceal himself upon the continent, he formed a resolution of seeking out a place in some of the islands of the Mediterranean, where he might hide himself. In order to this, he embarked with only one disciple at Paretonium, a haven on the coast of Lybia, on board a vessel bound for Sicily; hoping that henceforward no one might know him, or become troublesome to him in his retirement.

But the saint could not long lie concealed here, for, soon after his arrival, a man possessed with an evil spirit, casting himself at his feet, was perfectly healed. This being noised abroad, great multitudes, who laboured under corporeal diseases, resorted to him to obtain their cure, whilst numbers also of devout and religious people applied to him for their spiritual profit. No sooner did the saint perceive this, than he gave his disciple to understand that he wanted to depart from Sicily into some strange country, where he might be utterly unknown. Wherefore, in compliance with

his request, he conveyed him away in a ship to the coast of Dalmatia, where for a short time he led a solitary life, not far from the city of Epidaurus, now called Ragusa. But neither here could he remain long concealed, his miracles everywhere betraying him.

The applause that followed these miracles would not suffer the humble servant of Christ to remain any longer in Dalmatia: therefore, taking boat privately by night, he fled away, and within two days found a ship departing for Cyprus, on which he embarked.

The saint landed at Paphos, a noted city of Cyprus, and chose himself a dwelling-place about two miles from thence; being now wonderfully pleased that he had found rest, at least for a short time, in this solitude: but scarcely had twenty days elapsed, when the devils, in different parts of the island, published his arrival, by the mouths of those that were possessed: and several of these, both men and women hastened to him, and were delivered. Here he remained about two years, meditating on some private place of retirement, and after a long search discovered a place in the island, about twelve miles distant from the sea, amongst mountains and woods that were almost inaccessible, which proved quite to his mind.

In this solitary abode, the man of God dwelt for the last five years of his mortal life, seldom visited by any one but Hesychius, on account of the difficulty of coming at his dwelling; as also, because the people were persuaded, that the neighbourhood was haunted by a multitude of demons.

St. John Climacus says, that as the proud value the esteem of the world so much, that to acquire it, they falsely attribute to themselves

several gifts and advantages which they have not, and announce themselves to be of higher birth, to be possessed of more wealth and talents than they are; so they who are very humble, so far show the desire they have of being despised by the world, that to make themselves the more despicable, they wish to have imputed to them some defects which they really have not. We have, says he, an example thereof in Simeon the hermit, who, knowing that the president of the province, moved by the reputation of his sanctity, was coming to see him, sat down on the threshold of his door with a piece of bread and cheese in his hand, which he began to eat, assuming all the appearance of a simpleton. The president, on seeing him, felt contempt, and returned; but the hermit remained quite happy, because he had obtained what he desired. We have several examples of the same kind; as that of St. Francis, who, to avoid the honourable reception intended for him, began to knead the dirt with his feet; and that of brother Juniper, who was found playing at see-saw on a beam with little children, in order to render himself despicable. It is true, says St. John Climacus, that what the saints have done therein has often come from a particular inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and that consequently they are rather to be admired than imitated; but if we do not imitate them in their holy follies, we ought to endeavour, at least, to imitate them in the zeal which made them commit them, and in the ardent desire they had to be despised by the world.

The fear and dread of the honour and esteem of men is common to all saints, and if some of them were sometimes pleased to be honoured and

esteemed, it was only when the glory of God and the salvation of souls was concerned.

It is related of St. Ignatius, as we have remarked above, that he used to say, if he had but given way to his fervour, he should have run about the streets covered with rags, and all over dirt, that he might pass for a fool; but the excess of his charity, and the ardent desire he had to be useful in the conversion of souls, repressed those motions, and obliged him to behave himself with such gravity and decency as was proper for him. His inclination was, nevertheless, to be despised; nor did he only embrace all occasions with pleasure that he might be so, but he even sought them with great earnestness.

It is true, therefore, to say, that the esteem and praise of the world have nothing of harm in themselves, when we know how to make good use of them; and, therefore, that one may with a good conscience seek and be pleased with them, as St. Xavier, when he went to wait upon the king of Congo, accompanied by a numerous and splendid retinue: nay, it may be even an act of virtue to praise one's self, provided it be done in the spirit it ought to be—namely, when it has for its only object the honour and glory of God; and thus St. Paul also did, who, writing to the Corinthians, he praises himself, and glories in the favours God had done him; saying, he had laboured more than all the other apostles; and he relates the revelations he had had; and his being rapt to the third heaven. But he did this because it tended to the glory of God, and the good of those to whom he wrote. It was that they might the more easily acknowledge him for a true apostle of Jesus Christ, receive his doctrine,

and thereby profit the more. He said these things, too, with a spirit which not only despised the glory of the world, but embraced contempt and reproach for the sake of Jesus Christ. For he knew when it was necessary for the salvation of others, to give so advantageous an account of himself, as also when and how to humble and make himself of no reputation; saying, that he was not worthy to be called an apostle, because he had persecuted the church of God. He called himself, one born out of due time, a blasphemer, a violent persecutor; and when any occasion of being despised offered, he was delighted with it.

Wherefore, for those who are thus disposed, there is no fear when they accept any honours, or even to speak to their own advantage; for they never do it but when they judge it necessary for the glory of God; and as it is not their own, but the glory and good of souls, they seek; so the honours they receive, and the praises they assume to themselves, leave not the least impression of vanity upon their heart.

Now, it is this humility which every one should endeavour to arrive at, and they chiefly, who are called, not to lie hidden under a bushel, but to be exposed to the sight of all as a city upon a high mountain, and to give light like a candlestick. But to do this, good and deep foundations must be laid; there must be an ardent desire of being despised by everybody; and that desire must proceed from a deep sense of our own nothingness, such a one as St. Francis had when he began to tread the mud that he might pass for a fool. For that deep knowledge of himself, which made him desire to be contemned, was the cause also that when the hem of his garment and feet were

kissed, he valued himself no more, and was not puffed up with vanity thereupon; but being as steadfast in the contempt of himself as if no honour had been done him, he ascribed all to God alone.

TWENTY-FOURTH DAY.

"Man seeth those things that appear, but the Lord beholdeth the heart." (a)—*Our Blessed Saviour.*

"We are only worthy the price at which God values us. True merit must be weighed in His scales, for it is His judgment which alone can decide between real and counterfeit virtue."—*Venerable John Berchmans.*

Saint John Climacus says, that when we are praised, we ought to cast our eyes upon our sins, for then we shall find ourselves unworthy of those praises; and so they will serve only to raise in us greater sentiments of confusion and humility.

The same saint relates, that a great servant of God, purposing to walk in the path of humility, the devils, jealous of the progress he had made therein, wished to divert him from it, by sowing seeds of vain-glory in his heart; but by a divine inspiration he found out an easy remedy against their malice. He wrote upon the wall of his cell the names of some of the chief virtues, according to the most excellent idea that could be framed of them, as *perfect charity, most*

(a) 1 Kings xvi. 7.

profound humility, angelical chastity, continual fervour of prayer; and so of the rest. And when he found himself attacked by vain thoughts, "Let us come to the trial," said he to the devils; and, beginning to read the inscriptions and titles he had written, as—*Most profound humility;* I am not, said he, come yet so far. I should think myself happy to come near it; but so far am I from being arrived at the last degree of humility, that I am not, it may be, even got to the first. *Perfect charity:* It is true I find that I have charity; but it is far from being perfect, for I speak sometimes very roughly to my brethren. *Angelical chastity:* It is not a thing I can flatter myself with, since I am subject to so many thoughts and motions contrary to purity. *Continual fervour of prayer:* I am far from having it, for I am often distracted or drowsy. Speaking afterwards to himself, he added, when thou shalt have acquired all these virtues, thou oughtest to say that thou art an unprofitable servant, and must look upon thyself as such, according to those words of our Saviour: *When you shall have done all that is commanded you, say, we are unprofitable servants.*(a) And if it is so, what thoughts at present oughtest not thou to have of thyself, since thou art still so far from perfection?

We read of St. Francis Borgia, that nothing gave him so much pain as when he saw that he was honoured as a saint; and being one day asked why he troubled himself so much for a thing he had no hand in, he answered, that being so unlike to what he was believed to be, he feared that he should be called to a more severe account by God.

(a) Luke xvii. 10.

It is related of the venerable Father Pinamonti, that, notwithstanding all the sublime gifts with which he was endowed by God, he considered himself deserving of contempt rather than praise. He looked upon himself as so entirely destitute of all good, that there was no one to whom he did not think himself inferior, entertaining so much the higher opinion of others as he despised himself. Every other person he looked upon as his superior, whom he was bound to serve, and he never allowed any opportunity to pass of exercising this humble act of servitude. From this most humble esteem of himself arose his constant repugnance to all manner of superiority, thinking it an unheard-of mistake that he, who was the lowest of all, should be put over the rest, and that he should be set to rule a whole community, who could not even direct himself. It is certain that in the government of his own soul he thought himself in as great need of direction as the youngest and most inexperienced novice.

One of the beautiful instructions which the great St. Antony gave to his disciples was, that if they did not discover any guilt in themselves, they must not therefore be puffed up with self-conceit, or presume to justify themselves, and despise others, but rather fear lest self-love should blind and deceive them, remembering that an all-seeing God is to be their judge, that His judgments are very different from those of men, and that *there is*, according to the wise man "A way that seemeth right to man; and that the latter end thereof leadeth to death." As to himself, he had so low an opinion of his own merits and advancement in virtue, that when he returned from his visit to St. Paul, being asked by his two

disciples, Amathas and Macarias, where he had been so long, he made no other answer but "Woe to me, a sinner, who deserves not to bear the name of a religious man! I have seen Elias; I have seen John in the wilderness; I have seen, with truth, Paul in Paradise." And thus, without explaining himself any farther, he went into his cell, striking his breast.

We read of St. Jane Frances of Chantal, that she kept herself thus lowly, little, and humble, like a little child, holding the hand of him who guided her in the name of God, without so much as asking "Where are you leading me?" She said, rather with the ardent St. Paul, in that spirit of holy blind submission, "What wilt thou have me to do?" God having regarded the humility of His servant, and having made her the honoured mother of so many daughters, she wished to appear rather a disciple than a mistress in the sublime lesson of humility, and she wrote as follows to her blessed father, St. Francis:—"I ask my dear Father's assistance, for the honour of God, to humble myself. I desire to be most exact in never saying things whence glory or esteem may redound to me." The blessed Father wrote these words in reply, on the same piece of paper:—"Doubtless, he who speaks little of himself does extremely well; for, whether our words be to accuse, to praise, or to abase ourselves, we shall see that they will only serve as a bait to vanity."

TWENTY-FIFTH DAY.

"When thou art invited, go, sit down in the lowest place." (s)—*Our Blessed Redeemer.*

"If we are punctilious as to rank, precedence, or titles, we render ourselves contemptible; for respect when freely paid is honourable, but is base when sought after and exacted as a right. When the peacock spreads his tail, in order to admire himself, by elevating his beautiful feathers he ruffles all the rest, and displays his utter ugliness."

"The love and pursuit of virtue are the beginning of virtue; but the love and pursuit of honours are the beginning of contempt. Great minds are not taken up with such petty toys as rank, honours, and salutations; they are engaged in better things: such trifles engross only little minds, which have nothing better to occupy them. He who would collect pearls, loads not himself with shells; and he who would acquire virtue, loads not himself with honours. Every one may, indeed, take his proper rank and keep it, without prejudice to humility, provided this be done without affectation or contest."—*St. Francis of Sales.*

We read of St. Catherine of Bologna, that once, when her health became very feeble, the abbess, at her request, excused her from being present at the choir for a few days. When this time had elapsed, she was seized by a fever, and suffered such severe pains that she felt quite unable to be present, and she accordingly remained away without any scruple. When she felt better, having heard the bell ring to call together the chapter, she went there, as she was accustomed to do, with all the others. When all were assembled, the abbess said to her, "Sister Catherine, I am very much astonished at your absence from the holy office. It is true I gave you a dispensation for several days; but after these had passed by you should

(s) Luke xiv. 10.

have returned to the choir, or if you found that impossible, at least you should have mentioned to me the cause of your absence, as the other sisters do in similar cases." Catherine humbly replied, "I have done wrong, my mother; in future I will take care to fulfil your wishes. But as I have sinned, I pray you to give me a penance." When she had left the chapter, some of her sisters blamed her for her simplicity, telling her that she should have alleged her infirmities, which had never left her. Catherine, who saw very well that it was their compassion for her which made them speak in this way, said to them, "My sisters, you must not lament over my good fortune; do you not understand that it is the Holy Spirit who speaks by our mother's mouth? Since she wishes me to be present whilst God's praises are sung in the choir, I will be present; and I hope that the virtue of obedience, and the consolation we receive from the divine office, will give me the necessary strength. However, I assure you, my sisters, that if it pleased God to call me to die in choir, while engaged in praising Him, and in practising obedience, He would bestow upon me a very great grace, and satisfy one of my warmest wishes."

St. Joseph Calasanctius having once presented himself at the feet of the pope, in order to treat with him on a certain business connected with his institute, his holiness informed him that he intended to make him cardinal. The words of the sovereign pontiff were as a sentence of death to Joseph. He manifested his surprise and grief; he exaggerated his deficiencies; he declared that it would be the destruction of the pious schools; he argued upon the injury this would be to the

poor: in fine, he entreated so earnestly, and wept so bitterly, that the pope felt himself obliged to console him by promising to give up the idea of his promotion, for his holiness clearly saw that Joseph's tears were not the result of artifice, but of unfeigned humility.

Some imagine, that if they were particular as regards their reputation and rank, and enjoyed high and honourable offices, they would be able to labour more successfully for the good of their neighbour. But it is often their pride that deceives them. St. Ignatius was deeply convinced of this. He says, an humble, simple, and kind way of acting contributes more to the conversion of souls than one in which there still appears some tincture of a worldly spirit. And he not only practised this himself, but when he sent forth labourers into the Lord's vineyard, he always counselled them to walk in the same path; because whatever they should do would be firm and sure when they built upon so solid a foundation; and that God was wont to make use of such means to work the greatest things. Wherefore, on all occasions he acted according to this principle; for when he sent St. Francis Xavier and Father Simon Rodriguez into Portugal, he enjoined them to beg alms as soon as they should arrive there, in order that through poverty and humility they might make way for themselves to everything else.

He also directed Father Salmeron and Father Pascasius, when they went afterwards as apostolical nuncios into Ireland, to catechise the children and the common people. And when the same Salmeron and Father Laynez were sent

the first time by Paul III., to the Council of Trent, as his holiness's divines, the instruction which St. Ignatius gave them was, that every day, before they gave their opinion in the council, they should go and serve the sick in the hospital, and teach children the principles of the Catholic faith; and that after that preparation they might give it freely; and that it would then be sure to be received with greater advantage,—as, by the mercy of God, it indeed was.

We read in the life of St. Francis Xavier, that being ready to embark for the Indies, he would take no provisions with him for so long a voyage; and when the earl of Castagnede, who was then superintendent of sea affairs for those parts, pressed him to take at least somebody along with him, to serve him on shipboard, and urged, among other things, that he would have less credit with those for whose instruction he undertook the voyage, if they should see him wash his own linen and dress his own meat, he answered, "*Sir, that which has reduced the Church of God and its prelates to the condition they are in at this day, is the esteem and authority they endeavour to acquire by pomp and parade; and the true means which I must use to make myself esteemed, is to wash my old rags and dress my meat myself, without giving any one else that trouble; and, besides all this, to be continually busied in instructing and procuring the salvation of my neighbour.*" The earl was so surprised, and edified at the same time, at this answer, that he knew not what to reply.

A pious and learned author makes an excellent reflection upon these words of our Saviour:—

"And I seek not my own glory; there is One that seeks and judges." (a) If our Heavenly Father, says he, takes care himself to seek and procure our glory, it is to no purpose that we should seek it. Let us take care to humble ourselves, and to be what we ought to be, and leave to God the care of our reputation, so far as He sees it necessary for the good of our souls. The very things we do for our humiliation are those which He will make serviceable to acquire an esteem for us beyond that which we ourselves could have acquired by human means.

TWENTY-SIXTH DAY.

"I count all things to be but loss, for the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things; and I count them but as dung that I may gain Christ." (b)

"I judged not myself to know anything among you but Jesus Christ, and him crucified." (c)—*The Apostle St. Paul.*

"We must not be too eager and over nice in the preservation of our good name. Those who are over-tender and sensitive in this respect are like persons who take medicine for every slight indisposition; for as they ruin their health by the means they adopt to preserve it, so the former entirely destroy their reputation by being too nice in endeavouring to maintain it. The overlooking or despising of an injury or calumny, is in general a far more effective remedy than resentment, contention, or revenge. If we despise such things, we defeat them; but if we resent them, we seem to own them."

"Let us ever keep our eyes fixed on Jesus Christ crucified; let us proceed in His service with confidence and simplicity, with wisdom and discretion, and he will be the protector of our repu-

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(a) John viii. 50. (b) Philip. iii. 8. (c) 1 Cor. ii. 2.

tation. Should He permit it to be taken from us, it will be either to restore it to us improved, or to perfect us the more in holy humility, of which I may say, familiarly, that one ounce is more valuable than a thousand pounds of honours. Should we be blamed unjustly, let us peaceably oppose truth to calumny; and should we be still calumniated, let us persevere in humbling ourselves, and resign our reputation as well as our souls into the hands of God, who will best protect both. Let us serve God *in evil and good report*, that we may be able to say with holy David, 'For thy sake, O Lord, I have borne reproach, and shame hath covered my face.' I except, however, certain crimes so atrocious and infamous, that no one ought to submit to the imputation of them when he can justly clear himself; and I except also certain persons on whose reputation depends the edification of many; for as divines teach, they ought calmly to require reparation for the injury inflicted.'' —*St. Francis of Sales.*

"This saint having once heard that a certain influential person had spread a most shameful and infamous calumny against him, and that several persons believed it to be true, was not at all disturbed, nor lost any of his wonted calmness: 'I only value my fame,' said he, 'as far as it assists me to promote the glory of God. He knows how much I require for this purpose, and I wish for no more; and I willingly leave to him to give or preserve as much as is necessary for me to serve Him and to fulfil His will.'"

A BAD religious once presented a memorial, full of calumny and falsehood, to the Cardinal Antonio Barberini, against his holy superior, St. Joseph Calasanctius. The cardinal immediately summoned Calasanctius, and at the door of the antechamber, which was filled with his friends and many other distinguished personages, he, with a vivacity corresponding to his zeal, loudly reprehended, mortified, and condemned the holy man. He knew nothing of the motive for which he had been summoned, but the first glance at, and the first words of his eminence, convinced him that he stood there as a culprit. As such, he immediately placed himself on his knees, modestly casting his eyes on the ground, and without a

movement, or uttering a syllable in his own defence, he meekly listened to the impetuous invectives of misguided zeal. Never was innocence better exculpated than by that humble modesty and virtuous silence; the spectators looked one at another, and were edified to see a guilt so admirable—a guilt they would but gladly imitate. At the conclusion of the reprehension, the venerable old man arose, advanced towards his judge, thanked him for the correction, and humbly asked the favour of a private audience, in which he, with candour and simplicity, pointed out to his eminence his mistake. Blessed Ippolito Galantini, was detached to such a degree from all self-reputation and self-esteem as to call his persecutors, who were striving to defame him in every way, his counsellors and masters, because, as he said, they made him fit to work. When he happened to be treated injuriously and contemptuously, the good servant of God rejoiced as much as a proud man would at hearing his own praises. A person once audaciously said to him, "Ippolito, nobody believes you!" he showed the utmost good humour under the insult; and supposing that he had at last gained his point of being looked upon as vile and base, he went away smiling. Another time, some one sharply reprehended him for not having consented to some unjust demands, and accused him of being proud. Ippolito listened calmly to the invective, and whilst the persons present showed their indignation at it, he sweetly smiled, thanked his rebuker, and, falling at his feet, asked his pardon. But the following fact shows still more the deep humility and admirable meekness of this great soul. Instigated by the spirit of darkness, some of his malicious perse-

cutors took every opportunity of loading him with injuries, and of publicly defaming him by the blackest calumnies. He bowed his head with resignation when he heard of the attacks on his good name, but had no thought of vindicating it; far from resenting the injuries inflicted on his honour, he remained tranquil and placid, like Him of whom the Psalmist says, "As a man who heareth not, and who hath no reproofs in his mouth." His humility, however, only served to exasperate and embolden his perverse tormentors, who, seizing on a favourable moment, one day locked him up in a room, where they beat him most unmercifully. The holy man was not the least roused at this unexpected assault; but, in imitation of Jesus Christ, who when ill-used "Opened not his mouth," he did not say a single word to those cruel men, but acting toward them as Christian charity dictates, he began presently to pray for them, that our Lord would deign to enlighten their minds.

The infallible way to be esteemed by men, says St. Chrysostom, is that of virtue and humility. Endeavour to be a good religious; labour to be, and to show yourself the humblest of all, in the way you are, and on all occasions which shall offer themselves, and so you will gain the esteem of every one; for herein consists the honour of a religious who has truly renounced the world.

Agesilaus, one of the wisest kings of Sparta, being asked by Socrates how he could gain esteem in the world, answered, *You will gain it by endeavouring to be such a one indeed, as you would be thought to be.* And, at another time, some one else asked him the same question. *You will be esteemed,* said he, *if you say only good things,*

and do nothing else but what is good. There is a story also, that a great philosopher had a friend who was accustomed in all places to speak well of him, and his friend once took occasion to tell him how much he ought to be obliged to him, because in whatever company he went he praised his virtue and merits; the philosopher answered that he sufficiently requited him, by living so that in the praises he gave him he could not be accused of having said anything that was false.

Whoever therefore studies to be truly humble will undoubtedly gain the affection and esteem of men, although he seek it not; and the more he avoids being esteemed, the greater account will be made of him, for glory is like a shadow, which always follows when you go from it, and is never to be caught when you run after it.

Every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled, says the Saviour of the world, *and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.*(a) It is then manifest that he who is humble, and stoops to others, becomes thereby more esteemed, not only before God, but before men also; and, on the contrary, that he who is proud, and will have the preference everywhere, exposes himself to contempt and affronts by behaving himself after this manner. *O holy humility,* cries out the great St. Austin, *how different art thou from pride! It was pride, my brethren, which threw down Lucifer from heaven, and it was humility that made the Son of God descend from thence, to take our flesh upon him; it was pride that drove Adam from Paradise, and humility that gave the good thief a place there. Pride caused the confusion of tongues, and humility*

(a) Luke xiv. 11.

united people of different languages. Pride transformed Nebucodonosor into a beast, and humility raised Joseph, not only above all the Egyptians, but even above all the children of Jacob. Pride caused the destruction of Pharao, and humility exalted Moses.

TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY.

"We have received not the spirit of this world, but the spirit that is of God, that we may know the things that are given us from God. (a) By divine grace I am what I am."—*The Apostle St. Paul.*

"Many persons are afraid of, and abstain from dwelling on, the particular graces with which God has favoured them, lest they should be thereby excited to vain-glory and self-complacency; but in this they delude themselves with a false fear. For since, as the angelic doctor teaches, the consideration of God's benefits is the best means of attaining the love of God, the more they dwell upon them, the more will they love Him; and as particular benefits move the heart more powerfully than such as are general, so ought they to dwell the more upon them. Nothing, certainly, can tend so much to humble us before the mercy and the justice of God, as the consideration of His benefits and of our own sins. Let us, then, consider what He has done for us, and what we have done against Him; let us call to mind our sins in detail, and His gracious benefits in like manner, remembering that whatever there is of good in us is not ours, but His, and then we need not be afraid of vain-glory, or of taking complacency in ourselves. If, however, when reflecting upon the graces with which God has favoured us, we should be assailed with thoughts of vain-glory, the consideration of our ingratitude, imperfections, and wretchedness will be an infallible remedy against them. If we consider what we have done when God was not with us, we shall see at once that what we do when He is with us is not our work or production; we shall, indeed, rejoice in the possession of it, but we shall give all the

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(a) 1 Cor. ii. 12.

glory to God, who alone is the author of it, as the Blessed Virgin proclaimed that God had done great things in her behalf, but only to humble herself and to glorify God. *My soul*, said she, *doth magnify the Lord, because he hath done great things for me."—St. Francis of Sales.*

St. Teresa was most particular in warning spiritual persons against this error. "Let us not pay any attention," says she, "to certain feelings of humility which people have; for to some it seems a part of humility not to understand those gifts which our Lord bestows upon them. But let us know well how the case stands with us, viz., that God does not give us those gifts through our own merit; that we should be grateful to his Majesty for them; for if we know not what we receive we cannot excite ourselves to love Him. And it is a most certain truth, that when we see that by divine grace we are very rich (provided that we know that of ourselves we are poor), then more profit comes to us, and our humility becomes even more sincere. The other course tends only to intimidate the soul, and to make her think herself incapable of receiving great benefits; viz., if when once our Lord begins to bestow them, the soul should also begin to alarm herself with the fear of vain-glory. Rather let us believe that He who gives such favours to us will likewise give us strength to resist the devil, and grace to discover him when he proceeds to attack us upon this point. It is very certain, that we love a person the more when we often call to mind the favours he has conferred upon us. If, then, it be so lawful and meritorious for us always to remember that we have received our being from God,—that He made us of nothing,—that He preserves us, and pours benefits upon us and all who live by His

death and the sufferings which He endured long before we were created,—why should it not be lawful for me to know and to consider how often I was once accustomed to speak of vain things, but that now our Lord has given me the grace to desire nothing, save to speak of him? Behold here a jewel, which, when we remember that it has been given to us, and that we now possess it, forces and invites us to love Him!"

Speaking of herself, the saint relates that at one time she felt grievously troubled by two opposite temptations, viz., of presumption on the one side, and of diffidence on the other. When she was assailed by the former, she used to direct her attention to consider her own corruption and sinfulness; but when she was tempted to diffidence, she used to raise her mind to consider the infinite goodness of God, and the many favours which, through His pure mercy, she had received from His hands, and by acting in this manner she was enabled to overcome the enemy, and to put him to flight.

St. Catherine of Sienna used to do the same to deliver herself from the temptations of the devil. For when, to discourage her, he endeavoured to make her believe that all her life had been only a deception, she took courage at the consideration of the mercy of God, and expressed herself thus: —I confess, O my Creator, that all my life has been nothing but darkness, but I will hide myself in the wounds of Jesus crucified; I will bathe myself in his blood, which will wash off all my sins, and I will rejoice in my Creator and my God: *Thou shalt wash me, O Lord, and I shall be made whiter than snow.*(a)

(a) Psalm l. 9.

On the other hand, if the devil, by a contrary temptation, tried to puff her up with pride, by representing to her that she was already perfect, and that she had no further need to bewail her sins, or to be afflicted, she most profoundly humbled herself, and thus reasoned with herself: What! unhappy creature that I am! St. John Baptist never sinned; he, nevertheless, failed not to do severe penance; what, then, must I do, who have committed so many sins, and never acknowledged them as I ought? The devil then, enraged to see so much humility on one side, and so much confidence in God on the other, thus cried out: Cursed be thou, and they who have so well instructed thee!

Whatever may be the gifts which a truly humble soul may possess, she never prefers herself to any one, even the greatest sinner, because she is deeply sensible of what St. Austin says, that there is no sin committed by others which we should not also commit if God, by His mercy, did not continually hold us up by the hand. And therefore an ancient father of the desert, when he heard of any one's fall, used to weep bitterly, and say: Such a one is fallen to-day; as much may happen to me to-morrow, since I am a man like him, subject to all human weaknesses; and if I am not yet fallen, it is a particular grace of God which has supported me. For, as when we look upon a blind, deaf, or lame man, or one afflicted with any other infirmity, we ought to regard all these calamities in others as so many obligations which we have to God for having exempted us from them, so ought we, in like manner, to consider the sins of all men as so many gracious favours of God to us, since

we might have fallen into the same if, by His infinite mercy, He had not preserved us.

TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY.

"I can do all things in him who strengtheneth me." (a)—*The Apostle St. Paul.*

"The devil does much harm to those persons who practise prayer, and prevents them advancing, by causing them not to understand what humility properly is; and by endeavouring to make them think it is a species of pride to have heroic desires, and to wish for martyrdom, and to be anxious to imitate the saints. He immediately tells us, or makes us suppose, that the actions of the saints are only to be admired, not imitated, by us sinners. This I say likewise; only we must consider what in particular is to be admired, and what imitated. It would not be proper for a weak and sickly person to fast much or use severe penances. But we should be convinced, that we may, by the divine assistance, strive to have a great contempt for the world, not to esteem honours, nor be attached to riches."—*St. Teresa.*

The Lord is my light (says holy David), *and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the protector of my life, of whom shall I be afraid? If armies in camp should stand together against me, my heart shall not fear. If a battle should rise up against me, in this will I be confident.* (b) *Though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evils, for thou art with me.* (c) Let us admire the variety of words, wherein the holy prophet expresses the same thing. The whole book of Psalms is full of these sentiments, whereby the prophet shows us how much confidence he had in God, and how

(a) Philip. iv. 13. (b) Ps. xxvi. 1, 3. (c) Ps. xxii. 4.

much we ought to have: *Through my God I shall go over a wall.* (a) Nothing will be able to oppose me; He it is who, to overcome giants, makes use of men, who are but as locusts in comparison to them; in His name I will crush lions and dragons. It is He who teacheth my hands to war, and gives me strength to break a bow of steel.

There is nothing that we cannot do with the help of God; His grace can make us capable of everything; upon that we ought to rely, and upon that foundation should the Christian's courage rest. They who hope in God shall change their strength, says the prophet Isaias. They shall change earthly strength for that of heaven; their own weak arm for that of the Almighty; hence there will be nothing which they are not capable of undertaking and performing. Nothing is difficult to the humble, says St. Leo. The truly humble Christian is magnanimous, courageous, and bold to attempt great things; for it is not in himself, but in God, that he places his confidence; and when he turns his eyes upon God, he sees nothing that can be any obstacle to him. *Through God we shall do mightily; and He shall bring to nothing them that afflict us.* (b)

This is perfectly well explained by St. Basil in his commentary upon these words of Isaias, *Here am I, send me.* (c) God designed to send some one to His people; and because He desires to have a concurrence of our consent, in things which he designs to work in us and by us, in order that Isaias might understand him, he said, *Whom shall I send,*

(a) Ps. xvii. 30. (b) Ps. lix. 14. (c) Isa. vi. 8.

and who shall go for us? The prophet answers, *Here am I, send me.* He says not, observes this father, I will be the man that shall go; I will perform all that is to be done; for he was humble, he was sensible of his own weakness, and he saw that it would have been presumptuous in him to promise to do a thing that was above human strength; but he says only, *Here am I, O Lord, send me;* as if he had said: I know that of myself, I am not capable of so high an employment, but thou canst make me capable thereof, thou canst put into my mouth words powerful enough to soften the hardest hearts; and if thou sendest me, there is nothing but I shall be able to do in thy name. *Go then,* says our Lord to him. And St. Basil remarks hereupon, that the reason why Isaias became the ambassador of God, and minister of His word, was, because he knew how to keep himself within the bounds of humility, and had not attributed to himself the power of *going,* but acknowledging his own incapacity and weakness, and, on the other hand, convinced that he could do everything with the help of God, he had placed his whole confidence in him alone. This, therefore, is the magnanimity we have need of in great enterprises, and which will hinder our insufficiency and weakness from making us lose courage. *Say not: I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee: and whatsoever I shall command thee, thou shalt speak. Be not afraid at their presence: for I am with thee.*(a) So that as to what concerns the greatness of an undertaking, humility is not only not contrary to magnanimity, but is the very source and foundation of it.

(a) Jerem. i. 7, 8.

St. Teresa deemed it so important for the advancement in virtue, that we should be animated by great courage, and aspire after the most perfect virtues, that she speaks of this thing in various places: "His Majesty loves, and is a friend of courageous souls, provided they proceed with humility, and have no confidence in themselves. I have not seen any one of such souls remain behind on the road; and, on the other hand, I have never seen any cowardly soul (although provided with the safe-guard of humility), who has advanced as much in many years, as others have in a very few years. I am amazed when I consider how much is done in this way, by animating ourselves to do great things; and though the soul may not have sufficient strength to perform them immediately, yet she takes a flight, and mounts high, though, like a bird not yet well feathered, she grows tired, and reposes herself. Formerly, I often considered what St. Paul says: 'I can do all things in Him who strengthens me.' As for myself, I knew well I could do nothing. I also gained great profit from the words of St. Augustine: 'Give what thou commandest, and do what thou wilt.' I often thought that St. Peter lost nothing by throwing himself into the sea, though afterwards he was afraid. These first resolutions are of great importance, though in this first degree it is necessary that we should proceed with discretion, and do nothing without the advice of a director."

TWENTY-NINTH DAY.

"Woe to you that are wise in your own eyes and prudent in your own conceits."(a)—*The Prophet Isaias.*

Nothing is more dangerous for beginners in the spiritual life, than to wish to play the master, and to guide and convert others. Beginners should look after their own conversion and be humble, lest they should fancy they have done some great thing, and so should fall into pride.—*St. Philip.*

The Apostle St. Paul forbids that Neophites, viz., persons newly converted to Christianity, be promoted to sacred orders, and assigns as a reason the great danger to which such persons are exposed of being elated by pride, and falling into the snare of the devil, if they were elevated to the priesthood. As the Neophites should not dare to take upon themselves the heavy charge of the priesthood, so also the beginners in the spiritual life should beware of undertaking the very difficult and responsible charge of teaching and guiding others, unless they are compelled to it by the clear manifestation of the divine will, intimated to them through the instrumentality of their superiors. They ought to imitate in this point St. Augustine, St. Ignatius of Loyola, St. Camillus, and other holy penitents, who in the beginning of their conversion directed their best attention to consolidate themselves in the practice of humility, mortification, patience, and other Christian virtues, and did not enter into any public duty of instructing

(a) Isa. v. 21.

and directing others till after they had firmly established themselves in the practice of Christian piety.

St. Gregory says that there are some people who think themselves holy as soon as they begin to serve God, and to do some virtuous actions; and they are so intent upon looking at the good they do, that they entirely lose sight of the sins they have committed; nay, sometimes they see not even those which they do commit. But the perfect, and such as are truly good, do the contrary; for, abounding in virtue and good works, they look only on what is evil in themselves, and have their own faults and imperfections continually before their eyes. It is easy to see the consequence which this different manner of viewing one's self brings with it; for it happens from thence, that the latter, by humility, preserve the virtues which they have, whilst the former, glorying in the good they perceive in themselves, lose both it and themselves through pride. Before the apostles were sent to preach the Gospel throughout the world, our blessed Lord sent them into a holy solitude for forty days; after which he replenished them with his Holy Spirit, and thus enabled them to begin and fulfil their glorious mission.

Let us not be elated with anything, says St. Chrysostom, *but let us acknowledge ourselves to be useless, that we may prove useful both to ourselves and to others;* and St. Ambrose admonishes us, if we will advance the good of souls, to practise what St. Peter teaches: *If any man speak, let him speak as the words of God. If any man minister, let him do it as of the power which God administereth; that in all things God may be honoured,*

through Jesus Christ: to whom is glory and empire for ever and ever.[a]

Let us ground ourselves deeply in Christian humility, and this, more than anything else, will enable us to labour successfully for the conversion of souls. He is a fool, says St. Bernard, who puts his confidence in anything else but in humility.

(a) 1 Pet. iv. 11.

MARCH.

MORTIFICATION.

"The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away."—MATT. xi. 12.

FIRST DAY.

"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." [a]—*Our Blessed Saviour.*

"The perfection of a Christian consists in mortifying himself for the love of Christ. Where there is no great mortification, there is no great sanctity."—*St. Philip.*

THIS saint was so deeply impressed with this truth, that besides practising it himself with great perfection, he made those also practise it who put themselves under his direction. He used repeatedly to send his penitents, even though they were noble and distinguished persons, to ask alms at the church doors, when there was the greatest concourse of people. He made them sweep the steps and street in front of the churches, and then carry the sweepings away. When he built the rooms at San Girolamo, he made his penitents carry a good part of the materials, like common masons and labourers. At other times he sent them to private houses, to beg some morsels of bread, for the love of God; and he once ordered one of his spiritual children, who had a new coat on, and took a vain pleasure

[a] Matt. xvi. 24.

in his fine clothes, to go to the door of Santa Maria Maggiore to ask alms, forbidding him to eat anything that day but what was given him out of charity. When Cardinal Baronius first put himself under his guidance, he set to work to train him in the practice of self-denial; and for this purpose, he used often to send him to a public-house, with a bottle large enough to hold more than six mugsful, and then he bade him ask for a pint of wine to put into this huge bottle, but that first of all they were to wash the bottle out, and then he was to insist upon going into the cellar to see it drawn himself; and when Baronius began to put into execution all these directions, the publicans, thinking he was making game of them, abused him lustily, and often threatened to treat him worse. When Baronius was a priest, and lived at St. Giovanni de'Fiorentini, Philip used often to make him carry the cross before the dead bodies through the streets, by way of mortification. As soon as Bernardino Corona, a very respectable gentleman, joined his congregation, Philip began to mortify him in every possible way. He often made him go through the town, leading a horse by the bridle, as if he were a groom. Bernardino had also a remarkably fine beard; and Philip commanded him to follow the example which he himself had set him, and shave one-half of it. Corona set off immediately to perform the obedience; but the saint, seeing his readiness, told him he need not do it. All who lived with Bernardino in the congregation knew to what a purity of life he attained through these and other mortifications; he became as pure and simple as a child, and the saint loved him with an exceeding tenderness.

Whenever St. Ignatius saw in any a great desire of perfection, before everything else he helped them to conquer themselves, and imposed on them continual mortifications. This was the chief object of St. Ignatius in writing the book of spiritual exercises which he has entitled "Certain Spiritual Exercises for directing a Man how he may overcome himself, and, with a Mind free from evil Affections, may consider and determine on his Manner of Life." Father Olivier, speaking of the saint, says, "I have more than once heard this blessed man say, that he wished the men of our society to be like angels, who devote themselves wholly to the service and welfare of mankind, and yet at the same time continue fixed and immoveable, and undisturbed by any accident,—not being subject to passion or perturbation of mind; for, although the angels never omit to do anything in their power, and within the limits of their duty, for man's spiritual good, yet they are ever calm and serene, and subject to no disorderly emotions."

St. Francis Borgia, when any one extolled or commended another to him as a saint, "He will be so indeed," said he, "if he be truly mortified." Blosius compares a mortified servant of God to a ripe bunch of grapes, which is sweet and pleasing to the taste; and he that is not mortified, to a wild bunch of grapes, which is sharp and sour, according to the words of the Prophet Isaias—"I looked that my vineyard should bring forth grapes, and it hath brought forth wild grapes."(a) The difference between the children of God and the children of the world is, that these follow the

(a) Isa. v. 4.

motions of their passions, and think not of mortifying their bodies; "but they that are Christ's have crucified their flesh, with the vices and concupiscences,"(a) and are not guided but by the Spirit, which gives them life."

St. Jane Frances was most anxious that all her subjects should exercise themselves in self-abnegation, which she esteemed above every other gift. A superioress once sent her a long narration of some extraordinary graces, which one of her subjects had received; to which the blessed mother thus replied:—"You have sent me the leaves of the tree; send me a little of its fruit, in order that I may judge of it, for, for my own part, I think very little of the leaves. Now the fruits of a good heart, which God waters and causes to flourish by His grace, are a complete forgetfulness of self, a great love of self-annihilation, and a universal joy, without any exception, in the happiness and welfare of our neighbour."

The following signs which she gave to one of her religious daughters, by which she might ascertain the state of her prayer, whether it came from God or some other source, show still more clearly the great account which she made of mortification and self-denial. "See, my very dear daughter, if this elevation leads you to bitterness and self-abasement: if you learn in these sweetnesses, and this holy repose, to belong to God alone, to obey Him and your superiors in all things, without any exception; if you learn there to depend wholly on Divine providence, and to desire nothing but His holy will; if this repose takes from you all affection and attachment to

(a) Gal. v. 24.

creatures and earthly objects, and makes you quit them in order to unite yourself only to the love of the Creator; for, my daughter, it is not reasonable that the soul, which takes delight in tasting God, should seek, also, to enjoy things that are low and less than God. If it leads you to know yourself better, to be simple, sincere, true, and candid; in a word, like a little child. If you are not more patient and humble in bearing infirmities; if you are not even desirous of suffering more, without caring for any other satisfaction than to content your Spouse. Examine briefly, simply, and in general, if your devotional leadings make you despise still more the world, and your own vanity and private interests; in a word, if they do not seem to put the world, and all its glory, and your own self, beneath your feet, and to induce you to esteem, above all things, contempt, simplicity, humility, labour, and the cross."

On another occasion she wrote to a superioress as follows: "One of the things which cause much pain is to hear so many speak of prayer, interior favours, extraordinary graces, and not speak with the same ardour of pure virtue and solid mortifications. The soul who endeavours more to rise in elevated thoughts, and to enjoy interior repose, than to humble herself, and to be perfectly obedient and poor, knows not what it is to imitate Jesus Christ. He who does not practise virtue, when he has opportunities, destroys it in himself; we may work miracles, but if we do not lead virtuous lives, we are not servants of God."

SECOND DAY.

"He that will save his life, shall lose it; and he that shall lose his life for my sake, shall find it." (a)—*Our Blessed Saviour.*
"Take the sweet things of this world as bitter, and the bitter as sweet; thus thou shalt enjoy peace."—*Venerable Da Ponte.*

When this holy man met with persons desirous of giving themselves to the exercise of prayer, and of entering upon a more perfect way of life, his first and greatest endeavour was to ground them well in the practice of self-denial, exacting from them a blind obedience, with a total renunciation of all self-will. He well knew that true sanctity consists in the indefatigable exercise of real solid virtue, such as the mortification of the passions, in renouncing every sensual delight, and in chastising the body with severe austerities; and this, as he often remarked, was following the path pointed out to us, both by the word and example of our divine Redeemer.

We read of the venerable Margaret Alacoque, that she so excelled in the practice of self-denial as to have attained by this means the highest union with His divine Majesty. While very young, upon receiving the sacrament of confirmation, she offered herself to God as a victim set apart for sacrifice, and in this spirit she redoubled her austerities and prayers, and felt her ardent love of God, and her desire of pleasing Him and suffering for Him, increased within her. The carnival occurred some months after this. These days of pleasure were passed by her in

(a) Matt. xvi. 25.

severe penance; she fasted as much as she could, without being perceived, on bread and water, and gave secretly to the poor what was intended for her repast. Every day she disciplined herself with great rigour, and was deeply afflicted when she thought of the outrage done to God in these days of licentiousness by the sins of men, who think everything is permitted them at such a season. She was desirous to expiate these faults in which she had no share, and would willingly have endured any pain and made any sacrifice to make amends by her love and penitence for the injuries offered to Jesus Christ in this time of debauchery. Lent succeeded, which was passed in the performance of the same austerities. These austerities had their source in a lively desire which Jesus Christ had impressed upon the heart of His spouse, to imitate the suffering life He led upon earth. This desire was so intense, that all her penance and the contradictions she met with from others, seemed as nothing, and could not satisfy her burning love of suffering. Sometimes she would say with transport, throwing herself at the feet of the crucifix: "My dear Saviour, how happy should I be, if Thou wouldst imprint on me the image of Thy grief and passion." "That is what I mean to do," replied her divine Spouse, "provided thou dost not resist me."

After she had resolved to become a nun, she would not enter the convent of the Ursulines, because there she had some friends. When her brother spoke to her on this subject, she resolutely replied, "No, that shall never be. I will go into a convent of the nuns of St. Mary, that is a long way off, where I shall have no acquaintances. I wish to be a religious for God alone;

I wish to quit the world entirely, to hide myself in some corner where I may forget it, and be forgotten by it for ever. A religious house is a holy place, and those who inhabit it are destined not to serve God with a common degree of virtue, but to become true saints; and in order to become such, they must renounce themselves, and sacrifice their entire will without reserve." After she entered religion she applied herself with the greatest fervour to mortify both body and soul; and as her superiors repressed her ardour for penance, she incessantly employed a thousand other means to subdue her senses, weary her body, and mortify her delicacy. Whatever nourishment was most distasteful, this she chose for herself. Spoiled fruits, portions either cold or ill-dressed, pieces of bread picked up from the ground and covered with dust, were for her the most exquisite viands.

During the greater part of her life she suffered an intense thirst, like that felt in a high fever, and she avowed that nothing was ever able to satisfy it. To mortify herself still more in this infirmity, she resolved absolutely to abstain from drinking from the Thursday of every week till the Saturday. She practised this austerity for a long time, but it was at length discovered, and her superior, far from commending her, reproved her severely for it, forbade her to do it for the future, and even ordered her on each of those days to drink three or four times between the meals. The sister humbled herself and obeyed, but in her obedience she found out new means of mortification. She drank indifferently of every kind of water she could find, however unfit or disgusting it might be, even that which flowed from the washing-tub.

This novel kind of mortification was also remarked, and her superior in reproving her, desired her to accuse herself of it, as a fault against obedience, quoting that beautiful maxim of St. Francis of Sales, "that the truly obedient conforms not only to the command, but even to the spirit and intention of him who gives it."

THIRD DAY.

"Every one of you that doth not renounce all that he possesseth cannot be my disciple."(a)—*Our Blessed Saviour.*

"Self-renunciation is the fundamental law imposed on us by the Gospel; it must be without limits, if we desire to have perfection. This renunciation must begin by the senses, and will produce strict modesty; but it is necessary that it should pass to the soul, and there produce obedience by a total subjection of will and judgment. We advance in the path of divine love, only in proportion as we check the movements of self-love: and as the love of God is and must be perfection itself, we can only hope to become perfect by offering violence to ourselves."
—*Venerable Berchmans.*

THE following rules, which the venerable Margaret Alacoque laid down for her own particular guidance, show how much she was advanced in the spirit of self-renunciation:—"I will suffer in silence, without uttering a complaint, whatsoever may befall me; I will avoid no suffering or pain, either of body or mind, either of humiliation, contempt, or contradiction; nor will I seek to procure any consolation, pleasure, or satisfaction, save that of being destitute of all sensible comfort. When presented by Providence with any of these things,

(a) Luke xiv. 33.

I will accept them simply, renouncing any pleasure I may find in them, or that nature may take in satisfying its necessities or otherwise, only thinking of the love I owe in return to my Sovereign Lord, and not at all of my own satisfaction. I shall consider it a great happiness when whatever I say or do is despised, censured, or blamed; endeavouring to suffer all for the love or glory of the sacred heart of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in conformity to His holy intentions, to which I unite myself in everything."

To a tepid nun, who had recommended herself to her prayers, she wrote as follows:—"I must tell you, dear sister, that in praying for you, the following idea has been communicated to me:—The sacred heart wishes to establish his empire and the reign of his love in your heart, and you destroy it to establish that of creatures. He will not, however, permit you to find true peace, unless in the perfect renunciation of and detachment from these same creatures. You will obtain this by avoiding them, and you will be victorious by combating them. Learn then to resist and fight, for you will acquire nothing without trouble, and the prize is awarded to the conqueror alone. I entreat the sacred heart of Jesus to make you a conqueror, for mine cherishes you fondly, though attached to the cross, where it is impossible to do anything but suffer; but its only desire is to love in suffering, and to suffer in loving. This is all my ambition."

St. Philip had reached to such a height in the practice of self-renunciation, that he had nothing more at heart than to be humbled and despised by men. He used, for this end, repeatedly to skip about like a child in presence of others, even of

cardinals and prelates; and this, not only in remote and uninhabited places, but even in places of resort, such as palaces, squares, and streets. Sometimes he jumped three or four steps at a time in the presence of others, and then said to some of the bystanders, "What do you think of that?" On the 1st of August he began jumping in the square of St. Pietro in Vincoli, when there was an immense concourse of people because of the feast; and some one was heard to say, "Look at that old fool there;" and thus Philip gained what he so much desired, to be thought a man of little sense.

Another time, as he was passing through the Banchi, he met St. Felix of Cantalicio, the Capuchin, whose sanctity is well known to all. After many and most affectionate greetings, Brother Felix asked Philip if he was thirsty? Philip replied he was. Whereupon Felix said, "Now I shall see if you are really mortified," and he immediately held to him the flask which he carried round his neck. Philip put his mouth to it, and began to drink. A crowd soon gathered; but, instead of being scandalized, people said, "See! here is one saint giving drink to another!" The holy father then said to Brother Felix, "Now I wish to see if you too are mortified;" and, taking off his hat, he put it on the friar's shaven head, and told him to go away with the hat on. Brother Felix said, "Yes, I will go; but if the hat is taken away, that is your concern, not mine." Away went the friar some distance, with the hat on; but Philip, who already knew of his goodness and mortification, sent to recover his hat, and the two saints then went their way, leaving it doubtful which of the two was the most mortified.

He once hit upon a most singular device to draw ridicule and contempt upon himself. He had his beard cut on one side only, and went out with half a beard, jumping and dancing as if he had gained some victory. At other times, to mortify both himself and a brother of the house who was a skilful barber, he used to call him out, and make him trim his hair and beard in the presence of many. The by-standers, of course, gathered round; and from time to time Philip said, "Ah! that will do; yes, now you are trimming me well." Very often the holy father would remain in his room to receive visitors, with a pair of white shoes on, and a red shirt over his doublet, reaching below his knees. And in this costume he received even men of distinction, in order that they might despise him for his childishness or his singularity.

FOURTH DAY.

"The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away." (a)—*Our Blessed Saviour.*

"Weary not thyself with following a phantom, for thou shalt not arrive at the interior sweetness and joys of the soul, if thou dost not first deny all thy unruly appetites."—*St. John of the Cross.*

THE chief care of St. Ignatius, after his conversion, was to resist his disorderly inclinations, and to mortify himself in all ways. One day, as he was standing in the hospital, surrounded by all the filth of poverty, he was suddenly assailed by this

(a) Matt. xi. 12.

thought:—Wretched man, why have you abandoned your country, your friends and relations, and all your glorious enterprises, to stand in this vile dress amidst this rude and filthy crowd? Is it thus that, despite the obligations of duty, you tread under-foot the honour of your family and your own nobility?—These were the thoughts which spoke to his heart, and for a time he was troubled with vexation of mind. But no sooner did he perceive who was the mover of these thoughts than he began to associate with mendicants more familiarly than he had ever done before, and by this noble conduct the rebellion of nature was soon stilled, and the evil suggestion dissipated.

Another day, as he was overcome with fatigue, this evil question was put to his heart:—How is it possible that you can endure this misery all the rest of your life, perhaps till you are seventy years old?—To this Ignatius suddenly replied, for he had recognized the tempter: "And canst thou, O wretched one, promise me another hour of life?" Thus did Ignatius overcome the temptation, and recover his peace of mind.

As he was always employed in gaining the mastery over his own passions, so there was nothing which he used oftener to recommend to others than constant mortification and self-denial. *Conquer yourselves* was the usual topic of his public discourses and private exhortations. Francis Xavier, who had so well learned the lesson himself, used to repeat it daily to his brethren in India; and when they inquired why he always told them the same thing, he answered, "Because I have learnt it from our good Father Ignatius;" and he might have added, with the Apostle St.

John, "If you do this, it is enough." Though St. Ignatius set a high value on prayer, he did not measure the perfection of any man by this standard, but by his victory over his own appetites. Once, when he heard Luigi Gonzales say, in praise of a great servant of God, "He is a great man of prayer," the saint answered, "He is a man of great mortification."

A certain father being asked what was that strait and narrow way that leads to life, which is spoken of in the Gospel, answered—"To do violence to our own thoughts and inclinations, and to sacrifice our own will to the will of God. Such as do this may say with the Apostle, 'Behold, we have left all things, and followed Thee.'"

John the Cilician, abbot of Raitha, used to inculcate the following lessons to his brethren:—"My children, we have fled from the world by entering into religion; let us also flee from the flesh, and all its passions and concupiscences. Let us walk in the steps of our fathers and holy founders, who first inhabited this place, and led such strict and mortified lives with so much silence and recollection."

FIFTH DAY.

"The life of man upon earth is a warfare." (a)—*Holy Job.*

"Lament and consider that day as lost, in which you have not in some way mortified yourself for the love of God."—*St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi.*

St. Francis Borgia, in this as well as in other things, has given us an excellent example to

(a) Job vii. 1.

imitate. He said that he found everything that he ate very bitter, and disagreeable to his palate upon the day he had not chastised his body by some penance and mortification, and added, that he should be inconsolable if he knew that he had passed a day in which he had not mortified his senses or performed some penance. Moreover, he begged this grace of Almighty God, that all the pleasures of this life might become a punishment and cross unto him, and that sufferings might be to him instead of pleasure. It is in this that the most sublime degree of mortification consists, and therefore he said, that till he had arrived at it, he wished there might not be much attention paid him. He was continually on the watch to make war against his body; he daily found out means to mortify and treat it ill, and gave the title of friend to whatsoever helped him to afflict it. If he felt scorched by walking in the sun in the summer, he would say, Our friend treats us as he should do. He called by the same name, cold, wind, rain, the gout, and pain of the heart, to which he was very much subject. Lastly, those that persecuted him, and spoke ill of him, he also styled his friends, because they all helped him to conquer and subdue his body, which he looked upon as his mortal enemy. But he was not content with these occasions of suffering and mortification which daily presented themselves; he sought and found out new ways of mortifying himself. Sometimes he put gravel and pebbles in his shoes, to make it painful to walk. In summer he went very slowly, under the burning sun, to suffer the heat so much the longer; and did the same in winter, even in the midst of snow, to feel the cold more severely.

He plucked the hair out of his temples until they were become quite bald; and when he could not give himself the discipline, he would punish his body either by pinching or in some other way. In sickness, he sought to add new pains to those he endured; thus, he took loathsome physic at several draughts, very slowly, as if it were some pleasant beverage; and in taking pills, how bitter soever they might be, he would always chew them, and keep them a long time in his mouth. Thus did he apply himself to the mortification of his senses and the crucifying his flesh. And it was hereby he arrived at so high a pitch of sanctity and perfection.

St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi set the greatest value upon mortification, and would not allow her novices to attach themselves to anything whatever; but would have them examine every month whether they had a particular attachment to anything, and on detecting such, they were at once to give up that thing. "For," said she, "all that a religious parts with in this life will be restored to her with great interest in another."

One of the novices being over-fond of a little book of spiritual exercises, which she had translated for herself, was ordered by her to throw it into the fire. She made them exchange their habits and other things with each other, to prevent attachment to the same. One who showed a liking for a chaplet, had it taken away by her, and restored after two months, but with an order to bring it to her every evening, and this she continued to do until the novice became completely indifferent, and had learned to use things as religion required her to do.

There was an ancient hermit in Thebais, who

dwelt in a cave, together with a virtuous young man, his disciple. It was his custom to deliver an exhortation to the young hermit every evening, for his instruction, direction, and progress in virtue and piety; and after spending some time together in prayer, the old man gave him his blessing, and sent him to rest. One day that the servants of God had entertained some visitors with pious discourse till a late hour, after their departure, it happened that, in the midst of his usual exhortation he fell fast asleep. The youth waited in expectation of the father's awaking, that they might make their prayer, according to custom, before he retired. But the old man slept on so soundly as not to awake till after midnight. In the mean time, the young man, seeing he slept so long, and being wearied and sleepy himself, was strongly tempted to go away; but he resisted the temptation, and continued to remain. Shortly after, the temptation returned, and became very troublesome; but he again got the better of it: seven different times was he thus violently assailed, and still overcame the temptation, forcing himself to stay till his master awoke. On awaking, and finding the young disciple with him, the father asked him why he did not go to bed? "Because," replied he, "you did not discharge me." "Why, then," said the father, "did you not awake me?" "I could not presume," said he, "to disturb you." Whereupon, it being now midnight, rising up, they began their matins together; and when they had finished, the father sent him to take his rest. Whilst the old man was sitting afterwards by himself, he fell into a trance or ecstasy, when a stranger showed him a glorious palace, in which was placed a throne, and over the throne seven crowns, telling

him that they were destined by our Lord as a reward for the virtue and piety of his disciple, and that, as to the seven crowns, he had purchased them that very night. The father having asked him the next day what he had done in the night, he answered: Nothing particular; but as he insisted upon being told all that had passed, even to his very thoughts, he at length declared he knew of nothing whatever, except that he had been seven times strongly tempted to leave him during his sleep, and retire to rest; but as he had not been discharged as usual, he had forced himself to stay. Whence the father understood that every victory over oneself purchases a crown from God, and how important it is to overcome ourselves, even in small matters.

SIXTH DAY.

"The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; for these are contrary one to another."(a)—*The Apostle St. Paul.*

"Inordinate love for the flesh is cruelty, because under the appearance of pleasing the body we kill the soul."—*St. Bernard.*

BEFORE sin came into the world, man was in the happy state of innocence and original justice in

(a) Gal. v. 17.

which God first created him; the inferior part was perfectly subject to the superior, as a less noble thing is subject to that which is more noble, or as a servant to a master. "God made man just and righteous," says the Scripture. This subjection of the sensitive appetite to reason was so great, that it could not excite any irregular motion in man, nor any temptation, unless he chose it himself. But reason having since revolted against God by sin, the sensitive appetite rebelled also against reason; so that, whether we will or not, and even against our will, there are sometimes excited such motions and affections in our sensitive appetite as we ourselves condemn; according to these words of the apostle:—"The good which I will, I do not; but the evil which I will not, that I do."(a) If man, therefore, had not sinned, the body would always have been disposed, without any pain or contradiction, to do what the soul desired; but at present "the corruption of the body depresses the soul." (b) The body hinders it from doing many things that it could and would do. The body may be called a vicious horse that is to be rode a long journey; it is a horse that is uneasy in its paces—that starts at everything—that is soon tired—that is restive—and even lies down when it is most necessary to hasten forward. This punishment was due to man, says St. Austin, for his disobedience to his Creator; it is a just judgment that his flesh also should become disobedient to himself, and that this rebellion of his appetite should cause in him a continual war.

Moreover, we must take notice, that though

(a) Rom. vii. 19. (b) Wis. ix. 15.

baptism has delivered us from original sin, which is the cause of all this disorder, yet it has not freed us from the rebellion of our natural appetite against reason, and even against God, which is called by divines the fuel or incentive to sin. And it is by a just judgment, and by an adorable and special providence, that God would always have this rebellion remain in us, to punish and abate our pride, in order that the consideration of this our misery and baseness might serve to humble us in His presence.

The war which the flesh, in our present condition, wages against the spirit, is the chief reason why the saints have been so anxious to punish and mortify it in every way. This desire was so ardent in St. Aloysius, that although weak in health, he sought nothing but mortifications and penitential rigours; and to a person who once said that sanctity does not consist in corporal works of penance, but in the denial of the will, he wisely answered, in the words of the Redeemer: —"These things you ought to have done, and not leave those undone."(a) He meant to say, that for keeping the flesh in subjection to reason, the mortification of the body is necessary, as well as the denial of the will.

The world and the devil are very powerful enemies to our eternal salvation; but our own body, because it is a domestic enemy, is a still more dangerous antagonist. "A domestic enemy," says St. Bernard, "is the worst of foes." A town that is besieged has more to apprehend from the enemies that are within than from those that are without the walls, because it is far more

(a) Matt. xxiii. 23.

difficult to ward off the attacks of the former than those of the latter. St. Joseph Calasanctius used to say that "we should pay no more attention to the body than to the vilest rag." Such, indeed, has been the practice of the saints. As the indulgence of the body by sensual pleasures is the sole and constant study of worldlings, so the continual mortification of the flesh is to the saints a principal object of their care and of their desires. St. Peter of Alcantara was accustomed to say to his body:—"Oh, my body, keep thy peace; I shall give thee no rest here below. Pains and torments shall be thy portion in this life; when we shall be in Paradise, thou wilt then enjoy that repose which shall never end."

St. Antony was accustomed to say that the devil holds a close correspondence with the flesh, our domestic enemy, and with our unhappy self-love, and its passions. Wherefore, from the very beginning that he undertook to lead a perfect life, he chastised his body, and brought it under subjection by extraordinary austerities, which, how difficult soever in themselves, became sweet and agreeable to him, by reason of that ardent affection wherewith he embraced them. He frequently watched whole nights in prayer; he ate but once a day, and that not till after sunset. His food was nothing but bread and salt: his drink nothing but water, and that in a small quantity. His bed was a sort of mat, made of bulrushes, with a covering of hair-cloth, and sometimes only the bare ground. His application to God in prayer was without intermission; like the apostle, forgetting the things that were behind, that is, all he had already done, he was continually stretching forth himself to the things

that were before, and pressing with all his power towards the mark, to the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, ever considering himself as if he was just then beginning, and thinking of no more than of the present day.

SEVENTH DAY.

"They that are Christ's, have crucified their flesh, with the vices and concupiscences." (a)—*The Apostle St. Paul.*

"He who suffereth himself to be governed and carried away by his inferior appetite deserveth to be called a beast rather than a man."—*St. Vincent of Paul.*

It is related of Diogenes, that walking with a lantern and a lighted candle in it, at mid-day, in the market-place of Athens, as if he looked for something he had lost, one asked him what he sought for? "I seek a man," says he. "Do you not see a great many?" replied the other; "the market-place is full of them." "You are deceived," says he, "they are not men, but irrational creatures; because they live not as men, but as beasts, permitting themselves to be led by their beastly appetites."

Galen relates, that when he was very young, he one day saw a man run with a key in his hand, to open a door; but when he could not open it, having, through too great haste, set the key fast in the door, he fell into such a fury that he began to take the key between his teeth, and to break open the door with his feet. Afterwards he began

(a) Galat. v. 24.

to blaspheme, even foaming at the mouth like a madman; his eyes, sparkling and inflamed with rage, seemed as if they would start out of his head. This sight, says Galen, gave me such a horror of anger and passion, and so great an apprehension of falling into the like disorder, that I do not remember to have been angry upon any account since.

As it is a property of the angels to seek only after spiritual pleasures, so it is peculiar to beasts to seek only after sensual gratifications. Whoever, therefore, seeks and relishes the things that are above, becomes all spiritual, like an angel from heaven; but whoever fixes his affections on the gratification of his senses, sinks to the level of the brute creation. This agrees perfectly well with what St. Ambrose says, That he who lives according to the desires and appetites of the body is flesh, and he who lives according to the commandments of God is all spirit.

St. Vincent of Paul was so deeply penetrated with this truth that he kept a constant watch over his flesh, and treated it with the greatest severity. He seldom went to bed till towards midnight. A miserable pallet was his bed, and five years before his death he had the sheets taken off. Whether he had slept or not—whether he was in good health, or had the fever, which often happened to him—he always rose at four o'clock in the morning, and took the discipline. To it he joined, particularly in times of public calamity, the hair-shirt and pointed copper bracelets and cinctures. His hair-shirt, which still exists, makes even those accustomed to mortification tremble. An enemy to his body, in the most severe weather he kept his hands

exposed to the cold, to the impressions of which he was very sensible. His food was of the coarsest kind, and what was least palatable in his portion was always chosen by him; he sprinkled on it, from time to time, bitter powders, which made it very disagreeable. He generally fasted twice a week, and neither old age nor his infirmities could make him quit the habit. At upwards of eighty years, he fasted throughout Lent more rigorously than a robust man in the flower of his age.

St. Rose of Lima having undertaken to imitate in all things St. Catherine of Sienna, arrived at an astonishing degree of mortification. From her infancy she abstained from all sorts of fruits, which are delicious in Peru. At six years of age she began to fast three days a week on bread and water. At fifteen she made a vow never to eat meat, unless obliged by those who had authority over her, and when she thought she could not disobey without sin. After she became a nun, she was not content with a common sort of discipline; she made one for herself, of two iron chains, with which she gave herself such blows every night as to draw a quantity of blood from her veins.

We read of the blessed Claver, that he used to treat his body with the greatest rigour; the mere recital of it is enough to make the stoutest heart shudder. His ordinary bed was a mat, or a bull's hide, with a log of wood for his pillow; and for many years he slept on the bare ground. He was so accustomed to this, that even in his illness, he quitted his bed, to sleep on the boards, without, however, allowing the negroes who attended on him to perceive it. If he was occasionally re-

proached for his indiscretion in this respect, he excused himself by saying that he slept more comfortably there. He disciplined himself to blood three times every night: the first time, before he went to sleep; the second, about midnight; and the third, when he got up. His discipline was made either of tarred rope, with knots, or of small chains, armed with sharp points.

He wore two rough unpolished crosses, one on his back, the other on his chest, the latter being studded with points on the side that went nearest the flesh. To keep these firmly upon him, his whole frame was bound round with horse-hair ropes, the ends of which passed down his arms, even to the wrists.

And that no part of his body might be without suffering, when he was alone in his room he used to wear a crown of very sharp thorns upon his head, a thick rope round his neck, and horse-hair gloves on his hands. To conceal these terrific austerities, he placed a large stone against the door whilst he was engaged in them, and this falling as soon as the door was moved, served as a signal, and gave him time to lay aside some of his penitential implements. But what makes all this still more prodigious is, that although he was thus bound, fettered, and, in a manner, crucified, no one was more alert than he whenever anything was to be done for the service of his neighbour. In his apostolic journeys, he walked so briskly, that his companions could scarcely keep up with him; in fact, he often left them far behind. So true it is that charity gives wings, and produces in the saints a strength superior to all their weaknesses.

Once, in a very severe illness, the brother who

had care of him perceived his hair-shirt, and, in astonishment, exclaimed, "Oh! father, what is this? How long is the ass to be thus harnessed?" "Until death," quietly answered the father. Another time, when seized with a violent fever, the doctor ordered him to bed. He expressed some unwillingness, because just then he must have had help to undress himself, and therefore could not have concealed the instruments of penance with which he was covered; but the father-provincial ordered him to obey the doctor, and at the same time desired one of the fathers to help him to undress and get into bed. On seeing the manner in which he was bound and fettered, the physician fell on his knees, and, with tears in his eyes, exclaimed, "Ah, my dear father, how can you be otherwise than ill, when you treat yourself thus?" The sick man begged to be left alone, to finish undressing himself; but, in spite of all he could say, a negro was left with him, who found it so difficult to unfetter him from all his penitential trappings, that people wondered how he could manage to arrange them on himself.

EIGHTH DAY.

"Brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh, you shall die. But if by the spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live."(a)—*The Apostle St. Paul.*

"When a general besieges a city, he endeavours to prevent any provisions being brought to the besieged, in order that, through hunger and want, the enemy may be obliged to deliver up the city; so the man that desires to overcome his carnal passions must starve them by means of holy mortification."—*Abbot Moses.*

Behold here what it was that moved the saints to have so great a hatred of themselves, and to practise that spirit of mortification and penance, whereby they revenged themselves upon their flesh, and always kept it in subjection. They took care not to treat their body well, nor to give it any ease or pleasure; being persuaded that this was to furnish their enemy with weapons against themselves, and to give him new force and vigour against them. "Let us take care," says St. Austin, "not to permit our body to get too much strength, lest we use it to make war against our soul.(b) Let us rather apply ourselves to chastise and mortify it, thereby hindering it from rebelling against us; for whosoever educates a domestic servant too delicately will find him afterwards become insolent."(c)

The ancient anchorets thought it so necessary to mortify their bodies, that when they had no other means to do it, they had recourse to great labours, which they imposed upon themselves to

(a) Rom. viii. 12, 13.
(b) Aug. lib. de solut. monit. cap. 35. (c) Prov. xxix. 21.

extenuate and abate their strength. Palladius relates that a holy anchoret, finding himself extremely tormented with proud and vain thoughts, which he was not able to drive away, resolved to take a basket upon his back, and continually to carry earth in it from one place to another. And when they asked him what he was doing? "I vex him," says he, "who vexes me, and revenge myself upon my enemy."(a) The same thing is related of St. Macarius; and it is said that St. Dorotheus, who practised great penance and austerities, being one day asked why he so grievously tormented his body, "It is," says he, "because it torments me." St. Bernard, incensed with a holy zeal against his body, as against his enemy, breaks forth into these words: — "Let God arise, and let this armed giant fall at his feet; yea, let him fall, and let this enemy of God be crushed in pieces—this self-lover—this friend of the world—this slave of the devil. What do you think?" adds the saint; "certainly, you will show yourselves to be just and righteous judges, and will cry out with me, He is worthy of death; let him be hanged; let him be crucified."(b)

The mortification by which the blessed Nicholas Fattore used to subdue his flesh was truly wonderful. For fourteen years he went barefoot, winter and summer; in his latter years, by the advice of doctors, his superiors obliged him to wear sandals. His usual bed was a bundle of vines, with a log of wood or a stone for his pillow. If by chance he lay down on a bench or board,

(a) Pallad. in Vita E. Mac. Alex.
(b) Bern. Serm. 90 de Div. num. 3.

he used to think himself too luxuriously lodged. He rose every night to matins, after which he allowed himself no more sleep, remaining in the choir, generally with his arms outstretched in the form of a cross, contemplating with abundance of tender tears his dear Saviour agonizing on a cross for love of us. He disciplined himself every night. His discipline was not only heavy, but was moreover furnished with sharp iron rowels. He used, in disciplining himself, to strike from head to foot, saying: "It is written of our Lord—From the sole of the foot to the top of the head there is no health in him." In summer and winter he wore only his upper tunic, under which his whole person was enveloped in very rough hair-cloth. Besides his hair-shirt he had another, still more painful, which he reserved for the vigils of the principal festivals, or other occasions of private devotion, especially when he had any very particular prayer to offer. His continual disciplines and the hair-shirt reduced his body to one large wound. There was one religious whom he made his confidant, and whom he used to ask to dress his wounds when absolutely necessary, taking care always to bind him down to strict secrecy. Salt and vinegar was the only remedy he would ever admit of. His fasting might almost be called daily, so sparing was he in his diet; and this even at the table of distinguished persons, who often wished to have him for their guest. In Lent he seldom took anything but bread and water, before sunset. Sometimes he passed two or three days without taking so much as a drop of water. He had almost a dread of those who, without being his superiors, would in charity strive to moderate the implacable hatred which he bore his body.

St. Liguori was no less wonderful in his mortification than in his other virtues. He used to season his miserable pottage with bitter herbs, and not content with wearing sackcloth, chains, and crosses armed with sharp points, he gave himself the discipline twice a day.

The vigils of feasts were marked days with him, on which he mortified himself still more than usual, in order to obtain an increase of graces from God for himself and for those under his charge. On such days he generally scourged himself with divers cruel instruments, and especially with small cords, armed with very sharp steel stars. He also redoubled his macerations during the carnival and other profane *fêtes*. Not satisfied with these bloody disciplines, he also mortified his flesh by horse-hair shirts, with iron points, or by sharp little crosses, with which he covered his shoulders, arms, and legs. When he sat down, or got up again, his motions betrayed his sufferings. During the whole time that he was bishop he never once complained of any dish being badly cooked, although accidents of this sort were not rare in his house. One day, whilst at dinner, he asked for something to drink. Instead of wine, the servant took him a bottle of vinegar. Alphonsus drank it without manifesting the least displeasure. A little while afterwards, the grand vicar also asked to drink; but no sooner had he raised the glass to his lips than he got up angrily, and reproached the servant most severely; but his lordship laughed, and excused him.

St. Teresa thus speaks of the mortification practised by St. Peter of Alcantara:—"He told me," says she "how, to the best of his remembrance, he had slept no more than one hour and

a half between day and night for the space of forty years; and that this was the greatest difficulty he found in his penance at the beginning—to overcome himself in point of sleep; and for this purpose he was obliged to be either kneeling or standing; and when he slept it was in a sitting posture, leaning his head against a little piece of wood which he had driven into the wall; nor could he lie down at full length in his cell, even if he wished, for it was not above four feet and a half long, as is well known. During all these years he never put on his hood, how hot soever the sun, or how heavy soever the rain might be; he never wore anything on his feet, and his body was clad only with a habit of thick, coarse, sackcloth, without any other next his skin, and this as strait as could be endured, with a short mantle, of the same material, over it. He told me, that when the weather was extremely cold, he was accustomed to put off his mantle, and to leave the door and the little window of his cell open, that so, when he afterwards put his cloak on again, he might give his body so much refreshment by it, that it might be quiet with this additional warmth. It was usual with him not to eat till the third day. He asked me why I was astonished at this, for he said it was very possible for one who had accustomed himself to it."

NINTH DAY.

"Mortify your members which are upon the earth."(a)—*St. Paul.*
"The constant employment of a devout servant of God, who sincerely desires perfection, ought to be rigorously to mortify the disorderly inclinations of corrupt nature."—*St. Augustine.*

It is recorded in the Life of Father Segneri, that even when he was employed in preaching the most laborious missions, he never neglected to mortify his body by means of the severest penance. The use of the discipline was familiar to him. When engaged about the missions, besides those cruel scourgings he gave himself in public, he never failed to add three or four others privately. His invariable custom, in the houses of the society, was to take the discipline twice a day; and in the last years of his life, three times, in the morning, after dinner, and in the evening, using for this purpose strong cords, to which he not unfrequently attached sharp points of steel, so as to draw blood from his body. On different occasions, such as any public necessity, or novenas, which he made in honour of his various patron saints, he disciplined himself more frequently, and each succeeding time greatly increased the number of blows. Whilst the cruel work of flagellation was going on, he used to repeat frequently the "*Dies Iræ*," from the words, "Rex tremendæ majestatis," to those of the last stanza, "Gere curam mei finis," during which he struck himself with the greatest severity. As to sleep, he ordinarily devoted not more than six hours to it, and on the missions he

(a) Coloss. iii. 5.

slept even less than that. For thirty years and upwards, until the last of his life, he always slept upon naked boards, except in the time of the missions; then, as he found the exercise of this penance too difficult, he used for the time a bed of straw; and when, on account of the great esteem in which he was held, the governors and other persons of distinction, who in different places received him, provided for him excellent beds, prepared with every convenience, he would accept them indeed, but would lay himself down to rest on the straw alone, and it was not without much difficulty that he could be prevailed upon to make use of a mattress. At other times it was his custom to sleep upon a hair-shirt, which he spread out over the bed; but as that hindered him from taking the sleep which was absolutely necessary for him, he was obliged to desist from this mortification also.

We read of St. Hilarion, that on his going into the desert, he took no other clothing with him than the frock of a peasant, a sackcloth, and a hair-cloth, with a leathern habit to wear over it, which St. Anthony had given him. Here he built himself a little hut, covered with sedge and rushes, to modify the inclemency of the weather: this served him from the sixteenth to the twentieth year of his age; he then lived in a cell, which, according to St. Jerome's account, who had seen it, was but four feet wide, five feet high, and in length but a little more than his body, so that as he could not stand in it upright, it seemed rather a tomb than a dwelling for a living man. His diet was suitable to his lodging, his food for the first years being but fifteen dry figs a day, and that not till

after sunset. Afterwards, from the twenty-first to the twenty-seventh year of his age, he took only about eight or ten ounces of lentils steeped in cold water, or a little dry bread, with salt and water. For the space of three or four years more he lived upon nothing but wild herbs, and roots of the shrubs of the wilderness. From the thirty-first till the thirty-fifth year of his age, he confined himself to six ounces of barley bread per day, and a few potherbs without oil, which rule he continued to observe till his sixty-third year, when he began to allow himself a little oil with his herbs, but tasted nothing else, either of fruit, of pulse, or of any other kind of food. From that time, as he now supposed in the course of nature that he would not have long to live, instead of relaxing in his austerities, he redoubled them; so that, from the sixty-fourth year of his age till his death, that is, till he was eighty years old, he totally abstained from bread, and ate nothing during the four-and-twenty hours but a kind of mess composed of meal and herbs, which served him both for meat and drink, and this in so small a quantity that his whole daily sustenance did not weigh above five ounces. Such was his austerity with respect to his food, that throughout these different periods of his life he ever observed it as a constant rule never to eat nor drink till after sunset, how weak soever his health might be, not even on the greatest solemnities.

TENTH DAY.

"Every one that striveth for the mastery refraineth himself from all things: and they, indeed, that they may receive a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible one. I therefore so run not as at an uncertainty; I so fight not as one beating the air; but I chastise my body, and bring it into subjection: lest, perhaps, when I have preached to others, I myself should become a cast-away."(a)—*The Apostle St. Paul.*

"The more thou sparest thyself now, and followest the flesh, the more grievously shalt thou suffer hereafter; and the more fuel dost thou lay up for that fire."—*Thomas à Kempis.*

The Venerable Anchieta, whilst employed in the most laborious missionary work in Brazil, in imitation of the great Apostle St. Paul, chastised his body with the utmost severity. Disciplines and fasts were his familiar friends and domestics; he had no bed, no sheets, no coverlet, and took the little rest he allowed himself with his clothes on, that he might be the more ready for prayer. When there was any one sick at home, after having watched by his beside till he perceived him to be asleep, he threw himself upon the bare boards, making a pillow of his own shoes, slipping one into the other for the purpose; never did he sleep in a bed unless he was ill. Moreover, it is related of him, that, during the time he was rector of the college of St. Vincent, he kept a bundle of brambles concealed in a secret corner of the house, on which he used to rest his head, whilst the body was stretched upon the floor; and this was the only repose he allowed

(a) 1 Cor. ix. 25—27.

himself when, after long hours of prayer, he sought a few minutes' sleep. An ancient father, who had for many years led a most austere life in the heart of the wilderness, in the practice of extraordinary abstinences and continued labours, was one day visited by some of his brethren: after admiring his patience and perseverance, they asked him how he could endure so many trials and sufferings in that arid and frightful solitude. "Oh, brethren," said he, "all the labours and sufferings of the many years I have been here, are not comparable to one hour of suffering in the flames of hell; wherefore, in order to escape these, we must cheerfully undergo the hardships and labours of the short time of our mortal life. We must mortify ourselves here, that we may find never-ending rest in the happy mansions of the world to come."

There is no alternative, writes St. Liguori; we must either fight or perish. If the soul does not subdue the body, the flesh will conquer the spirit. To maintain his seat on a furious steed, and to escape danger, the horseman must hold a tight rein; and to avoid the corruption of the flesh, we must keep the body in perpetual restraint. We must treat it as a physician treats a patient, to whom he prescribes nauseous medicine, and to whom he refuses palatable food. Cruel, indeed, must be the physician who gives to a sick man noxious draughts, because they are pleasing to the taste, and who does not administer useful remedies, because they are bitter and disgusting. And great is the cruelty of the sensual man, when, to escape some trifling corporal pain in this life, he exposes his soul and body to eternal torment in the next. "Such charity is destructive

of charity, such mercy is full of cruelty, because it serves the body so as to destroy the soul." Speaking of sensualists, who deride the mortification of the flesh, St. Bernard says: "If we are cruel in crucifying the flesh, you, by sparing it, are far more cruel. Yes, for by the pleasures of the body in this life, you shall merit for soul and body inexpressible torments in the next." The abbot Moses being once censured for his severity towards his body, replied: "Let the passions cease to molest me, and I will also cease to mortify my flesh." When the flesh ceases to trouble me, I shall cease to crucify its appetites.

ELEVENTH DAY.

"I beseech you, brethren, by the mercy of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing unto God, your reasonable service.(a) Always bearing about in our body the mortification of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our bodies."(b)—*The Apostle St. Paul.*

"Be assured that the mortification of the senses in seeing, hearing, and speaking, is far more profitable than wearing even sharp chains, or hair-shirts."—*St. Francis of Sales.*

The venerable Margaret Alacoque gave the following instructions to her novices:—"You will show your love for Jesus Christ, if you are faithful in not making use of your eyes, ears, or tongue, but for His service. For this end, you must enclose yourselves in His heart, as in a

(a) Romans xii. 1. (b) 2 Corinthians iv. 10.

little solitude, to find there recollection and silence, mortification of all your senses, and in short, a new life of spirit and love.

"You will destroy within you the curiosity of your eyes; and, turning them from all useless things, you will fix them on yourselves, upon the movements of your own heart, and upon the heart of Jesus Christ.

"You will destroy your inclination for speaking, by never saying anything unnecessary in the places and times of silence.

"In conversations, you will use no expressions of complaint or murmuring, no slighting words of others, or disapprobation of their actions. You will say nothing in your own praise, or in justification of your defects. As to obedience, let there be no replies; and never show your repugnance or your inclinations.

"You will curb the vain curiosity of your ears, by refusing to listen to what would give them pleasure, or cause distractions. And each time you will say, 'O sacred heart! I die to this pleasure, to live only to Thy love.' Those who are the most faithful in these practices will be the most loved and caressed by Jesus, and will obtain the greater gift of prayer, at which we only arrive by true mortification."

The venerable De Ponte acquired such an exalted notion of the value of mortification, that he was able to practise it in a most perfect manner. Conscious that he had enemies that would oppose the acquirement of this virtue, it is inconceivable with what vigilance and rigour he fought against them, never allowing them either peace or truce, and this with such profit to his own soul, that, in his case, the state of original innocence seemed

to be restored, every passion following the rule of reason. He was naturally ardent and impetuous; yet, by offering continual violence to himself, he so completely changed his nature as to be thought cold, phlegmatic, and insensible. When ill-treated either by unkind manner or by injurious words, even in public disputation, by those whom his powerful arguments defeated, or by those whose defects he discreetly reproved, he always received the insults with invincible meekness, and bestowed benefits in return for injuries. Taught by holy Job, he made an agreement with his senses never to grant them the least comfort or relief, even though in itself lawful; he never would taste any kind of fruit, though it were served round the refectory. Though suffering habitually from burning thirst, it was but very seldom that he allowed himself the slight relief of rinsing his mouth with a little water. He never would go out into the country, to enjoy its freshness, and breathe its purer air. When little recreations were allowed within the college, he approved the custom, and was anxious for all to enjoy them, but denied himself this relaxation, spending the whole time in prayer before the blessed sacrament. He seldom left his room, or went out of doors, unless from necessity, obedience, or charity. He measured, as we may say, every word, every glance; always on the alert against surprise, and always referring everything to God. During his many years of suffering, no complaint escaped his lips; on the contrary, with holy joy he thanked God for admitting him to share the honours of the cross. To escape pity, he strove to conceal his sufferings as much as possible. Notwithstanding all that has been said, the servant of

God was fearful, as the saints always are, lest one day or other his body should turn traitor; he treated it, therefore, with such severity, that it was soon in no condition to wage war against him. So long as he had health, he always wore a sharp hair-cloth next his skin, which reached from head to foot. He scourged himself every night, with such rigour, that the blows were heard from his room through the whole length of the corridor. He slept on a bare board, dressed as he was. His fasting was, in a manner, continual; he ate very sparingly; water was his only beverage, and that in such small quantity as scarcely to suffice to quench the thirst. At length, his superiors, out of compassion for his health, were obliged to put him under obedience to one of his subjects with regard to his penance (and this even when he was rector), in order to moderate the excessive rigours which were undermining his constitution and materially shortening his days.

TWELFTH DAY.

"Let your modesty be known unto all men. For the Lord is nigh." (a)—*The Apostle St. Paul.*

"Where Christ is, there modesty is found."—*St. Gregory.*

The venerable Father Pinamonti watched most carefully over his senses, but especially over his

(a) Philippians iv. 5.

eyes. When passing through the principal cities of Italy, he never showed any desire to see their curiosities, whether villas or gardens, galleries of paintings or palaces, which afford such delight to others; he showed himself as regardless of these earthly glories as he was enamoured with those of heaven. But he went most willingly to those sanctuaries where miraculous crucifixes and devotional images were held in veneration, to refresh his mind, and recommend to God the good result of his missions. When he was invited by persons of eminence to see some remarkable object in their galleries or gardens, he never slighted the invitation, through respect for the person of the individual, but went to the spot without evincing any annoyance; whilst, however, he remained there, present in body, he availed himself of these spectacles to raise his heart to heaven, and unite his soul with God.

St. Teresa gives the following account of the great modesty of St. Peter of Alcantara:—"He told me he had lived for three years in a house of his order, without knowing any of the religious, except by their speech, for he never lifted up his eyes; hence, when he was obliged to go from one place to another, he knew not how, except by following the other religious. This was the case on journeys. As for women, for many years he never looked at any one. He told me that it was now all the same to him whether he saw any one or did not see them."

The great St. Bernard, after being a novice for a year, could not tell whether his cell was vaulted. In consequence of never raising his eyes from the ground, he never knew that there were but

three windows to the church of the monastery in which he spent his noviciate. He once, without perceiving a lake, walked along its banks for an entire day, and, hearing his companions speak about it, he asked when they had seen it.

The saints were particularly cautious not to look at persons of a different sex. St. Hugh, bishop, when compelled to speak with women, never looked at them in the face. St. Clare would never fix her eyes on the face of a man. She was greatly afflicted because, when raising her eyes at the elevation to see the consecrated host, she once involuntarily saw the countenance of the priest.

The indulgence of the eyes, writes St. Liguori, if not productive of any other evil, at least destroys recollection during the time of prayer. For the images and impressions caused by the objects seen before, or by the wandering of the eyes during prayer, will occasion a thousand distractions, and banish all recollection from the soul. It is certain that, without recollection, a religious can pay but little attention to the practice of humility, patience, mortification, or of the other virtues. Hence it is his duty to abstain from all looks of curiosity, which distract the mind from holy thoughts. Let his eyes be directed only to objects which raise the soul to God. St. Bernard used to say, that to fix the eyes upon the earth contributes to keep the heart in heaven.

Oh! what devotion does a modest religious inspire, what edification does he give, by keeping his eyes always cast down. St. Francis of Assisium once said to his companion that he

was going out to preach. After walking through the town, with his eyes fixed on the ground, he returned to his convent. His companion asked him when he would preach the sermon? We have, replied the saint, by the modesty of our looks, given an excellent instruction to all who saw us. It is related of St. Aloysius Gonzaga, that when he walked through Rome, the students would stand in the streets, to admire his great modesty.

St. Ambrose says, that to men of the world the modesty of the saints is a powerful exhortation to amendment of life. "The look of a just man is an admonition to many."—Ps. cxviii. The saint adds, "How delightful it is to do good to others by your appearance." It is related of St. Bernardine of Sienna, that, even when a secular, his presence was sufficient to restrain the licentiousness of his young companions, who, as soon as they saw him, were accustomed to give to each other notice of his coming. On his arrival, they became silent, or changed the subject of their conversation. It is likewise related of St. Gregory of Nyssa, and of St. Ephrem, that their very appearance inspired piety, and that the sanctity and modesty of their exterior edified and improved all who beheld them. When Innocent the Second visited St. Bernard at Clairvaux, such was the exterior modesty of the saint and his monks, that the Pope and his cardinals were moved to tears of devotion. Surius relates a very extraordinary fact of St. Lucian, a monk and martyr. By his modesty he induced so many pagans to embrace the faith, that the Emperor Maximinan, fearing that he should be converted to Christianity by the appearance of

the saint, would not allow the holy man to be brought within his view, but spoke to him from behind a screen.

THIRTEENTH DAY.

"If any man think himself to be religious, not bridling his tongue, but deceiving his own heart, this man's religion is vain."(a)—*St. James.*

"Beware of too much speaking, for it banishes from the soul holy thoughts and recollection with God."—*St. Dorotheus.*

A CERTAIN brother desiring to know from St. Macarius how he might secure the salvation of his soul, "Fly," said the man of God, "from the company of men; keep close to thy cell, and there weep continually for thy sins; and, as the best penance for them, be equally careful to mortify thy tongue by keeping silence, and thy stomach by fasting and abstinence." To the like effect, he said one day to the brethren, as they were coming out of church, after mass, "Fly, my brethren, fly!" "Whither, O father," said one of them, "wouldst thou have us fly? Can we go farther from the world than we are at present, in this vast solitude?" The saint put his finger to his tongue, and said, "I mean that we should fly from this;" and, saying no more, he entered

(a) James i. 26.

his cell, and there remained in silence and recollection.

Once St. Pambo applied to one of the religious to be instructed in some of the Psalms. This brother began with the thirty-eighth Psalm, "I said I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue;" which words Pambo had no sooner heard, than, without waiting for the second verse, he retired to his cell, saying it was enough for one lesson, and that he would go and endeavour to learn it in practice. Six months afterwards the monk, finding that he did not apply to him for any more lessons, asked him the reason why he stayed away so long from him? "Oh, brother!" said he, "I have not yet perfectly learned to practise the first verse which you taught me." Many years after this, one of his friends asked if he had not now at least learned his lesson? to whom he replied, that it was with much difficulty he could yet reduce it to practice, notwithstanding his nineteen years' application. However, by his perpetual attention not to offend in his words, he arrived at length at so great perfection in this particular, that he is thought in this point to have equalled, if not excelled, St. Anthony himself. When any one consulted him, either upon any passage of the scripture, or any other spiritual matter, he never would answer upon the spot, but desired time to consider it. Sometimes he employed whole months on these occasions, examining before God what answer he should give; but then the answers he returned carried with them so much weight, and were so holy, that they were received by all like oracles dictated from heaven.

St. Ignatius used to say that the best way to

know whether the spirit of fervour and devotion flourishes in a religious community, is to ascertain whether silence is observed.

Father Perez, a Carmelite friar, tells us that, while a secular, he entered one day into a house of the Order, and was so edified and filled with devotion by the silence of the brethren, that he renounced the world, and remained in the convent. Father Natalis, of the Society of Jesus, used to say, that to reform a religious house it is enough to establish in it the observance of silence, because each of the religious would then practise recollection, and would attend to his own advancement. Hence, also, Gerson says that the holy founders of religious orders have prescribed and earnestly recommended silence to their religious, because they knew how important its observance is for the maintenance of fervour. In his Rules for Religious, St. Basil insists, not once, but frequently, on silence. St. Benedict commanded his monks to endeavour to observe continual silence. "Omni tempore, debent silentio studere monachi."—Cap. xlii.

Oh! how dear to God does the religious render himself, says St. Liguori, who loves silence! especially if by his silence on extraordinary occasions he offers to God an act of mortification; for example, when he feels annoyed by long solitude, or when any very adverse or prosperous event occurs, which he feels strongly impelled to relate to others. On the other hand, the religious who indulges in much speaking will be generally dissipated, will easily omit his meditations and other devout exercises, and thus shall gradually lose all relish for God. St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi used to say, "The religious that has not

a love for silence cannot find pleasure in the things of God." Hence the unhappy soul will abandon herself to worldly amusements, and retain nothing but the name and habit of a religious.

FOURTEENTH DAY.

"Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account for it in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." (a) —*Our Blessed Saviour.*

"If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man." (b) —*St. James.*

St. Arsenius used often to say, that when he had been talking, he had always found matter whereof to repent, but had never repented of having kept silence.

One of the brothers said once to Abbot Sisois, "I desire to keep a guard upon my heart." He replied, "How can you guard your heart, and preserve it from dangers, if you suffer the gate of the tongue to be always open?" The same holy abbot used to say that the great business of our pilgrimage is to keep a guard upon our mouths.

It is related of St. Aloysius Gonzaga, that he kept a constant watch upon his mouth, being fully persuaded of what the wise man says, that "He who keepeth his mouth keepeth his soul." For this purpose, before going to recreation, he

(a) Matt. xii. 36, 37. (b) James iii. 2.

used to say the following prayer of holy David: —"Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, and a door round about my lips. Incline not my heart to evil words, to make excuses in sin."(a)

It is related of the blessed Galantini, that he was most rigorous in moderating his tongue; knowing how much it contributes to dissipation of mind, he held so strict a guard over it, that, beyond spiritual conferences, he allowed it not the slightest liberty. Solitude, so dear to the saints, was his delight. That he might keep his mind more recollected, and more united with his good Jesus, he sought the most retired places apart from the crowd. With this object, he frequently withdrew to the oratory at Fiesoli, to enjoy in solitude the presence of his beloved Lord. He would most willingly have spent all his days in sweet retirement, if, in submission to the advice of superiors, he had not felt himself obliged to attend to the advantage and salvation of souls. On this subject, he used to say, "We must leave God for God; and step from repose in God to labour for one's neighbour."

Love silence, says St. Liguori, because it is a great means of acquiring the spirit of prayer and of disposing the soul to converse familiarly with God. The holy David says that "In silence and in hope shall be your strength." Our strength shall be in silence and in hope; for by silence we shun the occasions of sin, and by hope we obtain the divine aid to lead a holy life.

Whenever you have to speak, be careful, in conformity with the advice of the Holy Ghost— "Make a balance for thy words," (Ecclus. xxviii.

(a) Psalm cxl. 3, 4.

29), to examine what you ought to say. Make a balance for your words, that you may weigh them before you give expression to them. Hence St. Bernard said, "Bis ad limam veniant verba, quam semel ad linguam." Before your words come to the tongue, let them pass twice under the file of examination, that you may suppress what you should not utter. The same was said by St. Francis of Sales, in other words, viz., that to speak without defects, every one should keep a lock on his lips, that in opening his mouth to speak, he might reflect well on what he wishes to say.

At recreation, which is the proper time for unbending the mind, endeavour, as often as you can, to speak on something connected with God: "Loquamur Dominum Jesum," says St. Ambrose, "Ipsum semper loquamur."—In Ps. xxxi. Let us speak of the Lord Jesus, and let us always speak of Him. And what other enjoyment should a religious seek, than to speak of his most amiable spouse? He who has an ardent love for another appears unable to speak of anything but him. They who speak little of Jesus Christ show that they have but little love for Jesus Christ. On the other hand, it often happens that good religious, after speaking on divine love, feel more fervour than after mental prayer. At the conversations of the servants of God, says St. Teresa, Jesus Christ is always present.

FIFTEENTH DAY.

"Take care lest your hearts be overcharged with gluttony." (a) —*Our Blessed Saviour.*

"It is impossible to overcome our enemy in the spiritual conflict without the previous subjugation of our appetite."

The Venerable Benedict Labré, from his earliest years, was so mortified with regard to food, that it was necessary to urge him to take the necessary nourishment. He chose for himself what was most common and coarse, giving to the servants anything delicious and delicate, and more than once he was secretly observed to give in private to the poor part of his own food. Though he was yet young, and at an age which requires more nourishment, he fasted rigorously, though not obliged to it, the whole of Lent.

His uncle had a garden filled with ripe strawberries and fruits of every kind, which by their fragrance alone provoked the appetite of others, particularly of boys, who, by their nature, not knowing how to resist such allurements, are accustomed to take them even unlawfully; but it never happened that Benedict allowed himself to gather so much as one, or even to pick up any that fell to the ground through ripeness or the wind, though he might have reasonably presumed upon his uncle's tacit permission and even pleasure, as he was very affectionate and liberal towards him.

When he was his own master, in his pilgrimages, in the cities, and in Rome, he took only enough

(a) Luke xxi. 34.

food to preserve life. His miserable nourishment was composed generally of vile and refuse things, which others rejected—orange-peel, hard stalks of brocoli, withered cabbage-leaves, useless weeds, and spoiled and rotten fruit. On the day of his death, when seized with mortal fainting-fits, his provision for that day was found in his pocket—a piece of bread, some orange-peelings, and nothing more.

He occasionally went to the door of a convent in Rome, where on some days soup is given at mid-day to the poor. But the cup in which he received it, his attitude, and the affronts which he was obliged to suffer, evidently showed that he went rather to have an opportunity of practising mortification, humility, and patience, than for the soup.

A wonderful and at the same time very edifying action of his was observed by one of the attendants of Monsignor della Porta, in the court-yard of the palace. He was in a part of it from whence he could see without being observed, when he saw the poor man come in, modest, composed, breathing devotion, and approaching the fountain, he drank a little water. Then thinking, at that hour after mid-day, there would be no one to notice him, he knelt down, and gathering up with his hand the remainder of the soup which had been thrown shortly before amongst the dirt, he ate it up by degrees. The spectator was astonished at such mortification, and was confirmed in the idea of his sanctity with which other events had inspired him.

We read of St. Macarius of Alexandria, that having received a fine bunch of grapes at a time when he had a longing desire after that kind of

fruit, in order to exercise himself at once both in abstinence and charity, he sent them to another solitary, who, being sick and infirm, stood more in need of them. The good sick man, after thankfully receiving the present, which, had he followed his own inclinations, he would gladly have eaten, through the same spirit of mortification and charity refrained from eating them, and sent them to a third, who lived at some distance in the wilderness; the third again, in like manner, to a fourth, and so on, till they had passed from one to another of most of the inhabitants of the cells dispersed through the desert, without any one ever tasting them. At length, he who received them last, not knowing from whom they first came, and thinking they might be agreeable to their holy father, sent them to St. Macarius. The saint, perceiving the grapes to be the very same, and learning also, upon inquiry, through how many hands they had passed, gave God thanks for that spirit of abstinence and self-denial which his brethren had showed on this occasion, and, for his own part, was animated thereby to a greater fervour in all the exercises of a spiritual life, but, nevertheless, could not be induced to eat of the grapes himself.

SIXTEENTH DAY.

"Exterior as well as interior mortification are necessary for perfection; but with this difference, that the former should be practised with discretion, the latter without discretion and with fervour."—*St. Liguori.*

"The discipline and other like austerities ought not to be practised without the leave of our director. He who does it of his own mind, will either hurt his constitution or become proud, fancying to himself that he has done some great thing. It is generally better to give the body rather too much food than too little; for the too much can be easily subtracted, but when a man has injured his constitution by the too little, it is not so easy to get right again. The devil sometimes craftily urges spiritual persons to penances and bodily austerities, in order that by indiscretion they may so weaken themselves, that they may either be unable to attend to works of greater importance, or that the infirmity which they have brought upon themselves may frighten them from their usual exercises of piety, and make them turn their back upon the service of God altogether. They who pay a moderate attention to the mortification of their bodies, and direct their main intention to mortify the will and understanding, even in matters of the slightest moment, are more to be esteemed than they who give themselves exclusively to corporal penances."—*St. Philip.*

The holy Abbot Agatho, being asked whether the mortification of the flesh by corporal labours and austerities, or the keeping a guard upon the inward man, was of greater importance in a spiritual life, answered, that man was like a tree, of which corporal labours and austerities were the leaves, but the regularity of the interior was the fruit. Wherefore, as our principal care must be about the fruit, because it is written that "every tree which doth not bring forth good fruit shall be cut down, and shall be cast into the fire," so our chief solicitude must be about the interior;

yet we must not neglect the leaves of corporal exercises, since they are both an ornament and a covering to protect the fruit.

St. Austin, speaking of that passage in St. Matthew's Gospel, "Since the coming of St. John Baptist the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force," says: "There are two sorts of abstinences and crosses; the one corporal, the other spiritual. The one afflicts the body, as, for example, to fast, to take a discipline, to wear a hair-cloth, to lie upon the ground, and such like practices that mortify the flesh, and deprive it of its ease and pleasure; and this is what we call exterior penance. The other is more meritorious and more sublime, which is to command our passions, daily to make war on our vices, to become rigorous censors of ourselves, and to be in continual strife against our inward man. It is, constantly to break our own will, to despoil ourselves of our own judgment, to overcome our anger, to repress and keep under our impatience, and, in a word, to command our mouth, our eyes, our tongue, and all our senses and bad inclinations." "It is he," says St. Gregory, "who, after this manner, having broken down this rampart of his passions, ascends with violence to the kingdom of heaven." We must become brave and valiant after this manner, to be able to carry it by assault. This kind of mortification, therefore, is far more excellent than the former, because there is far greater merit in curbing our mind, in trampling under foot honour and the esteem of the world, than in afflicting our bodies by fasts, disciplines, and hair-cloths.

What St. Philip delighted to mortify above all

things, in his penitents, was the understanding and the will, and this he set himself to do with the greatest earnestness, especially when there was some show of plausibility in reasoning. This is perhaps one of the most difficult of all the mortifications of the spiritual life. He used to say, "Perfection consists in leading our own will captive, and in playing the master over it. I do not make much account of abstinences and such like things, when self-will is the manager, but I would have you occupy yourselves in captivating the *razionale*, even in trivial things, if you wish to conquer in great ones, and to profit in the ways of virtue." So strongly was he impressed with these truths, that if any one came in his way who had the reputation of sanctity, he used to try his virtue by mortifying his self-love, and if he found it stand the trial, he honoured it as real holiness; if not, he suspected it as delusion. Some he ordered to kiss the feet of those who came to visit him; others to dance and sing in the presence of cardinals and prelates. He made several go about with a beretta of white cloth upon their heads, and others with a large hat and a cord.

SEVENTEENTH DAY.

"With all watchfulness keep thy heart, because life issueth out from it." (a)—*The Wise Man.*

"There is great reason to lament the ignorance of some, who burden themselves with indiscreet penances, and with many other disorderly exercises of their own self-will, putting all their confidence in such acts, and believing that they become saints by means of them. If they would but only use half the same diligence in mortifying their unruly appetites and passions, they would make more advancement in a single month, than in many whole years with all the other exercises." —*St. John of the Cross.*

St. John of Egypt, in his sermons to the monks, used to inculcate, in an especial manner, the necessity of keeping a strict guard upon their hearts and thoughts, in order to prevent any passion, or disorderly affection of the will, or the vain desire of anything which is not according to God, from taking root in the heart; for from these roots a thousand distractions presently shoot up, to the great prejudice of attention and devotion in prayer, as well as to the purity of the soul; "so that it is not enough," says he, "to have renounced the world, and all the works of Satan, the prince of the world, nor even to have left our goods, our lands, and all we possessed in the world, we must also renounce our imperfections, and all vain pleasures, *and unprofitable and hurtful desires, which,* as the apostle tells us (1 Tim. vi. 9), *drown men in destruction and perdition.* For without renouncing

(a) Proverbs iv. 23.

these things, we never effectually renounce the devil and all his works, since it is by their means the devil enters and takes possession of our hearts. These disorderly affections hold a correspondence with our enemy; nay, as they proceed from him, and open to him the door of the soul, it is no wonder such souls should never enjoy rest; and that they should be always agitated by commotion and troubles, since they are always yoked to such a wretched guest, to whom they have given admittance by their passions and vices. On the other hand, he that has indeed renounced the world—that is to say, has retrenched all his vices and passions, and banished all disorderly affection to sin far from his soul, so as to leave no gate open by which the devil may enter—he who represses his anger, resists and overcomes all irregular motions to evil, avoids all lying, abhors envy—he who not only speaks well of every one, but even denies himself the liberty of thinking evil of any one, and who always considers the good and evil of his neighbour as his own, and behaves accordingly on every occasion—such an one opens the gate of his soul to the Holy Spirit, Who enters in, and fills it with His light, and with those admirable fruits of charity, joy, peace, patience, &c., which are the produce of this Heavenly Comforter."

Wherefore, the saint proceeds to recommend, in a particular manner, all who are desirous of being truly religious, to labour to acquire such perfect purity, both of conscience and heart, as may enable them to offer up to our Lord a perfect and pure prayer, and may introduce them to a certain familiarity with His Divine Majesty and His holy angels, and to such a happy union

of love, as to be enabled to say, with St. Paul, (Rom. viii. 38, 39), " neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate me from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." He further adds, that the best means to attain this perfect purity, so pleasing to God, is to retrench, by mortification, all vanities, inordinate affections, and sensual delights of every kind, even in small things, and to walk resolutely in the narrow way of self-denial and penance; if we join to this the love of solitude, silence, and recollection of spirit, we shall easily arrive at perfection, and even upon earth begin to enjoy a kind of heaven.

The venerable Father Pinamonti, by a constant watch over his own heart, attained such a dominion over his inferior appetites that, during many years, the Rector of his College at Rome was unable to discover what passions prevailed in him, or, to speak more correctly, what passion he had not subjected to the dominion of reason. A friend, who for a long time lived on most intimate terms with him, purposely watched what impression various unexpected and unpleasant occurrences would make upon him, and never remarked the least alteration under them, the holy man always remaining undisturbed and tranquil in mind.

There were not wanting, in the cities where he preached, and in the houses where he lived, grievous disappointments and sensible mortifications; yet on all occasions he showed what a peaceful sway he held over his interior affections. He was often publicly insulted by persons of respectable appearance, in terms the most

revolting, such as must have raised the indignation of any breast less meek than that of Father Peter, but in him these insults had no effect, nor ruffled his usual serenity. In one of the principal cities of Italy there was a dignified ecclesiastic, who, from false reports, conceived a particular aversion to this servant of God, and neglected no means to display his hatred, uttering slanders against him without reserve. All this came to the knowledge of the father; and though he was well aware how necessary a good name, and the estimation of ecclesiastics, is to a missionary, because thence the people form their opinions, yet, by a rare example of moderation, he wished to endure the weight of reproaches. Such, in fact, was his patience, that he never uttered the least complaint against his adversary, and never contradicted what had been falsely attributed to him, and on all occasions studied to speak well of those who spoke ill of him.

But his patience and moderation towards his companions were still more remarkable—showing how perfectly he had brought his passions under the obedience of reason. For a length of time it was necessary for him to be constantly engaged with a person of an entirely opposite disposition, whose ideas and manner of acting on many points he could not approve. Yet, during the whole of this period, Father Peter never showed the least sign of resentment or annoyance, nor even uttered a syllable of complaint, either before his companion or to others, to the astonishment of all, who knew well that this proceeded not from any want of spirit, but from an excess of mildness and the perfection of

virtue. And many important services, which he rendered this same person, served to bring out more clearly this admirable disposition.

An ancient religious being told by a certain brother that he was not sensible of any conflict or war in his soul, replied: "It is because your soul is like an open place; every one comes in and goes out at his pleasure, without meeting any resistance, or notice from you; but if you kept the door shut and guarded against evil thoughts, you would quickly become sensible of the internal war."

EIGHTEENTH DAY.

"He that striveth for the mastery is not crowned unless he strive lawfully." (a)—*The Apostle St. Paul.*

"Our passions revolt continually, and often cause us to fall; but this must not trouble us, nor make us dejected and discouraged: on the contrary, we must do violence to ourselves, deriving benefit from our own falls, and animating ourselves to the combat by the examples of the saints, who have felt the same weaknesses that we have. Like them we must fight against ourselves to the end, and die with our arms in our hands, for the crown is given only to the victorious." — *Venerable M. M. Alacoque.*

It is not what appears externally that constitutes the perfection of the saints, but what is concealed

(a) 2 Timothy ii. 5.

within their interior. The most important occupation of the saints consists in regulating the depraved appetites of the old man, and subjecting to the dictates of reason the rebellious passions of corrupt nature, by a continual war against themselves; for that peaceful dominion which was enjoyed by our first parent through the means of original justice, can only be partially acquired by us, and is gained by labour and incessant mortification. This is undoubtedly a more arduous task than punishing the flesh, and breaking it as an enemy; because though the flesh may feel a repugnance to chastisement, yet by custom it accommodates itself to it; whereas the irregular passions of the mind, when mortified, resume fresh vigour, and though dead, rise into life again by a fresh rebellion against the spirit. To submit these, then, to reason, is much more laborious and necessary for acquiring perfection.

The Venerable Margaret Alacoque thus wrote to a nun, who seemed terrified at finding in herself so many evil inclinations. "You give me pleasure, my dear sister, by so sincerely exposing to me the inclinations which torment your poor heart to lead it to evil, and to prevent you from giving yourself entirely to God. I trust that they will not succeed, and that, by the resistance you will offer with the help of grace, they will be an occasion of great merit for you. Do you understand? I must not flatter you: you will receive nothing but by fighting for it, and, if one may so say, by carrying it at the very point of the sword; that is, you must be of the number of the violent who take heaven by force. Be of good courage: grace will not be wanting to you, nor the assistance of the heart of God, who

wishes to save you. Remember, He gives you this sight of your defects and miseries through the excess of His great love for you, and because He wishes to lead you to a high state of perfection: but you will only reach it by an entire and perfect renouncement of all things, and especially of yourself. You should live from day to day in a perfect indifference even for those things which are given you for your use, and deprive yourself of them when you feel an affection for them, though they may appear to you of little importance. Our enemy cares not with what he holds us enchained. In the second place, be persuaded that whatever makes you the most vile and abject in the eyes of creatures, is that which will render you the most agreeable in the sight of God. He will soon reject you if you become vain and are filled with a high estimation of yourself, and a desire of being esteemed by others. Do not attach yourself to spiritual sweetness, for that will not last long, but seek God by faith, and think that He equally deserves our love, whether He afflicts or consoles us. If He give you any sweetness in your exercises, you should believe that it is to dispose you to taste of His chalice, by humiliation, mortification, or in some other way."

This earth, says St. Liguori, is a field of battle, and our whole life must be one continued contest. He that is placed in front in battle must be always prepared for an attack: as soon as he ceases to defend himself, he is conquered. So the soul should never cease to combat her passions, however great her victories over them may have been; for human passions, though conquered a thousand times, never die. "Believe me," says St. Bernard, "that after being cut off, they bud forth again;

and after being put to flight, they return." Hence, by struggling with concupiscence, we can only render its attacks less frequent, less violent, and more easy to be subdued. A certain monk complained to the Abbot Theodore, that he had contended for eight years with his passions, and that still they were not extinguished. "Brother," replied the abbot, "you complain of this warfare of eight years, and I have spent seventy years in solitude, and during all that time I have not been, for a single day, free from assaults of passion." We shall be subject during our mortal lives to the molestation of our passions. But, as St. Gregory says, "It is one thing to look at these monsters, and another to shelter them in our hearts."—Mor., lib. vi. cap. 16. It is one thing to hear their roar, and another to admit them into our souls, and suffer them to devour us.

The human soul is a barren soil in which useless and noxious herbs constantly spring up; we must, therefore, by the practice of holy mortification, continually hold the mattock in our hands, to root them up, and banish them from our hearts; otherwise, our souls will become a wild uncultivated waste, covered with briars and thorns. "Conquer yourself," was an expression always on the lips of St. Ignatius of Loyola, and the text of his familiar discourses to his religious. Conquer self-love, and break down your own wills. Few, he would say, of those who practise mental prayer become saints, because few of them endeavour to overcome themselves. "Of a hundred persons," says the saint, "devoted to prayer, more than ninety are self-willed." Hence he preferred a single act of mortification of self-will, to long prayers, accompanied with many

spiritual consolations. "What does it avail," says Gilbert, "to close the gates, if famine—the internal enemy—produce general affliction?" What does it profit us to mortify the exterior senses, and to perform exercises of devotion, while, at the same time, we cherish in our hearts rancour, ambition, attachment to self-will and to self-esteem, or any other passion which brings ruin on the soul?

NINETEENTH DAY.

"He that overcomes himself in all things is a true religious."—*St. Macarius.*

"The habit and tonsure contribute little; but a change of manners, and an entire mortification of the passions, make a true religious man. He that seeks here any other thing than purely God, and the salvation of his soul, will find nothing but trouble and sorrow."—*Thomas à Kempis.*

THE Abbot Silvanus being asked by certain brethren to speak something for their edification, desired his disciple Zacharias to give them a lesson. The disciple taking off his outward habit, laid it upon the ground, and stamped with his feet upon it, saying: "No one can be a truly religious man who is not willing to be trodden under foot in this manner."

Cassian says, "It was the general opinion of all the ancient fathers, founded upon frequent experience, that it was impossible for any one to persevere in a religious state of life, if he had not

learned to overcome his own inclinations." In effect, what is more contrary to a religious life than those worldly inclinations we bring with us into it?

It is related of St. Vincent of Paul, that he had reached to such a high degree of mortification, as to have acquired a perfect dominion over all his natural inclinations. He had an air naturally severe: he reformed himself so much, that he always passed for a model of mildness and affability.

He loved his family so tenderly, that having seen with his own eyes the poor state in which it was, three months of reflection could not mitigate the trouble he felt. Yet he overcame it so far as to say to his brethren, according to the scripture: "I know you not," because he knew poor persons more to be pitied than they, and he looked upon a middling fortune as a germ of sanctification. In fine, he had so well-buried the old man with his desires, that persons who had studied him a great deal could discover neither inclination nor bent in him.

Whilst St. Pachomuis was happily employed in conducting a great number of holy souls in the ways of eternal life, and directing them to perfection by word and example, his sister, hearing the fame of his sanctity, came one day to his monastery, desiring to see him. The saint, who never admitted any woman into his house, sent her word by the porter that he was alive and well, and requested she would return home in peace, and not make herself uneasy on account of not seeing him in this transitory life; but added, that if she desired to follow the same kind of life that he did, to find mercy with God, and

secure a happy eternity, she should think seriously of it, and if this should be her fixed resolution, he would give orders for building a proper mansion for her, at a distance from his monastery, where she might serve the Lord under regular discipline, in all purity of soul and body, and in time engage many others, by her example, to dedicate themselves in like manner to the love and service of Christ in a religious life; for, to expect to find, said he, any solid rest, content, or happiness, but in works of godliness, as long as we carry this body of death about us, is a thing utterly impossible. His sister, hearing this, shed a flood of tears; but being at the same time touched with a powerful grace, determined upon the spot to choose that better part which he had so strenuously recommended to her, and accordingly, as soon as the monastery which he ordered to be built for her was in readiness, she entered into it, and there served our Lord with such sanctity and perfection, as to attract many others of her sex to join in her holy undertaking, and consecrate themselves to Christ under her direction.

TWENTIETH DAY.

"If we place our progress in religion in these outward observances only, our devotion will quickly be at an end. But let us lay the axe to the root, that being purged from passions, we may possess a quiet mind. If every year we rooted out one vice, we should soon become perfect men."

"This must be our business to strive to overcome ourselves, and daily to gain strength against ourselves, and to grow better and better.—*Kempis.*

"Perfect abnegation consists in a great watchfulness to know and see the least irregular motions of the soul; in repressing them promptly, and in chastising them vigorously in the manner of a valiant soldier, who, when assailed by an enemy, is found ever on his guard, and fights and overthrows him so effectually as to deter others from entering the lists against him."—*Venerable Da Ponte.*

This was the way by which the venerable servant of God succeeded in overcoming and subduing his inordinate affections. That he might the more easily curb and mortify them, as well as have them continually before his eyes, he reduced them to certain heads, in the following terms:—"My unruly emotions may be reduced to four: first, In my thoughts and imagination; which are inordinate, either because they are pernicious or vain things, or out of time, or dwelt on with too much solicitude. The second disorder is in my affections and will; either with regard to prohibited things, springing from pride, anger, envy, or any other vice, or because they are defective in their mode of action, occasioning perturbation, anxiety, immoderate affection to study, employment, or other such things. The third is a repugnance to acts of virtue, and tepidity in the practice of

them; such as are those which relate to the worship of God, to obedience, and to charity towards one's neighbour. The fourth is a license of the senses, in seeing, hearing, speaking; being moved to these things by curiosity, impetuosity, or levity. If in these four points I mortify and deny myself, I shall remove the impediment to union and familiarity with God.

"I understood, moreover, that this vigilance in mortifying myself, if I really seek to love His Divine Majesty, must be used principally in repressing the emotions of these four passions, joy, sorrow, hope, and fear, which are the causes and roots of all the others; and this, not only when they incline to evil things, but also when they would lead me to things which are useless, of no moment, or which do not concern me, or which are mere imaginations, which exist not, and never can exist. All these things occupy my intellect and my will in such a manner as to enervate virtue and spiritual strength, and prevent my affections from being directed to God. But when these emotions relate to necessary and natural things, I ought to refer them to God, and never accept them for the mere pleasure or convenience they may afford me; for instance, naturally I enjoy eating, study, being honoured, &c. I must refer this pleasure to God, inasmuch as it comes from Him and is His work, according to the words, 'Thou hast given me, O Lord, a delight in Thy doings.'—Psalm xci. In the same manner, if I feel moved to wish for health, employment, or other such things, I must take care to desire them as the effect of His divine will, and for His glory; in such a manner that God alone may be all my hope, all my pleasure.

So also in moments of grief, or fear of some temporal calamity; I must so comport myself, as to fear this danger, or grieve, inasmuch as the cause may spring from my sins; resting solely in the fear of having lost God, or the fear of yet losing Him. Then, proceeding further, there is another means, most useful in curbing these inordinate passions, viz., by opposing to them contrary affections; for instance, when I feel a pleasure in eating, in being honoured, or other similar things, I must excite sorrow within myself, because I am not treated as my sins deserve, or because they may hinder my progress in the service of God. The same may be said of the movements of other passions."

There are some who make sanctity consist in the exterior, in preserving a meek and edifying manner, and in displaying great moderation in all they do. But as to interior mortification, which is of greatest importance, they think not at all of it; but, on the contrary, are attached only to their own wills and judgments, and are more jealous of their honour and fame than of anything else. To such as these we may say, in some measure, what our Saviour said to the scribes and pharisees, "Wo to you, scribes and pharisees, who make clean the outside of your cups and dishes, and yet are full of rapine and impurity within. Blind pharisee, make first clean the inside of the cup and platter, that the outside may also become clean."(a) Make clean, therefore, and mortify first your interior, if you would have your exterior neat and clean. For if this exterior modesty proceeds not from an interior peace and tran-

(a) St. Matt. xxiii. 25, 26.

quillity of mind, all this is but deceit and hypocrisy. "You are," says our Saviour, "like painted sepulchres, which appear fair on the outside to men, but within are full of dead men's bones and all kind of corruption."(a) And what he said a little before, in the same chapter, is more to our purpose. "Wo be to you, scribes and pharisees, who pay your tithes of mint, anise, and cummin, and have neglected what is of greater importance in the law, which is judgment, mercy, and faith."(b)

TWENTY-FIRST DAY.

"If thou hadst a right spirit with thee, and wert purified from earthly affections, all things would turn to thy good, and to thy profit. For this reason do many things displease thee, and often trouble thee, because thou art not as yet perfectly dead to thyself, nor separated from all earthly things. Nothing so defiles and entangles the heart of man, as impure love to created things. If thou reject interior comfort, thou wilt be able to contemplate heavenly things, and frequently to feel excessive joy interiorly."—*Thomas à Kempis.*

"A man's chief care ought to be turned within himself: the renunciation of self-will is a greater thing than the raising of the dead to life."—*St. Ignatius.*

It was by this rule that this saint obtained such a dominion over his affections that he exhibited them only in such proportions as the time, persons, or the place demanded. Sometimes it happened that when he was in company with the other fathers, and some person came before him

(a) St. Matt. xxiii. 27. (b) St. Matt. xxiii. 23.

whose conduct required severe reproof, he was seen suddenly to assume an appearance so terrible, and to speak with such severity, that the very walls of the chamber seemed to tremble, and then, when the culprit had been dismissed, he returned to the conversation which had been interrupted with the same serenity as before, as if he had done nothing more than administer a slight reprimand. At the same time, even whilst he gave vent to his just indignation, he never lost his decorum of behaviour, but made men tremble before his majesty rather than his anger. A thoughtless expression never escaped his lips, or a syllable that was expressive of contempt or abuse, nor did he ever call men by offensive names.

In order to overcome an inclination to laughter which at one time troubled him, at night he used to inflict upon himself as many blows with a chain as he had laughed at different times during the day. To keep his accounts accurately, he used, whilst at Manresa, to tie knots in his rope girdle. Besides this, whenever he fell into *the* fault which he purposed to amend, he used to lift up his eyes to heaven, and, laying his hand on his breast, ask God's forgiveness. It seemed as if nothing took him by surprise, and that whatever came was the same to him, so that, in treating with him, it was not necessary to watch for opportunities or modes of approaching him. One of the fathers, observing one day that he came back from an audience with the Pope, for which he had to wait a long time, extremely fatigued, put off speaking to him on a certain affair till the following day, upon which the saint, to exercise him in virtue, for the fault was not

grave in itself, gave him so sharp a reproof, that he said afterwards, he did not dare to look him in the face, or come into his presence, for more than a week. From the constant tranquillity of his mind arose that serenity of countenance which made his children call his face a face for Paradise.

Once, when one of the brothers was sewing a bandage round his throat, to heal a swelling, the needle accidentally ran through his ear, and sewed it to the bandage. The saint, as if it had happened to somebody else rather than to himself, without any mark of pain or disturbance, merely said, "Look, my brother, what you have done." Once he was looking at a building which was in course of erection, when his foot slipped on some stairs, and he fell headlong against a wall opposite, with such violence that his companion thought he was dead. This great peril did not in the least excite or disturb the saint, nor did his countenance change; he did not so much as turn to look from where he had fallen, but proceeded calmly with his business, as if nothing had occurred.

Pietro Codacio, the steward, had borrowed some money for the repair of the house, and, as he delayed the payment, the officers of justice came to seize the furniture. The saint was in the house of a devout person, in company with some other gentlemen, conversing on divine things, when one of the fathers, in great trouble, came and whispered in his ear, informing him of what had happened. Ignatius only answered him, "Very well," and then continued the conversation for another hour. When he was on the point of taking leave, he said, "Do you know,

gentlemen, what news I have just received?" "What news?" they said; and then he told them the story with a smile, as if it did not concern him. His friends were greatly troubled, and made offers of assistance, but he, with the same calmness, told them not to vex themselves, for if they took away the beds they could sleep upon the floor, which was a very fit couch for poor men like them. "I shall only make them one request," he said, "and that is for some writings of mine, and if they demand these, let them take them, in God's name."

St. Ambrose says, "that he who knows not how to command his desires finds himself presently carried away with them, as by an unruly horse, who, having got the bit between his teeth, runs even to inaccessible places; and never rests till he falls with his rider into some precipice." Thus it is, if you do not destroy concupiscence—if you do not tame and bring it under—it will carry you from one disorder to another, from one vice to another, and will not desist till it has precipitated you into most enormous crimes, and even into the abyss of hell itself. "Permit not yourself to be carried away with concupiscence," says Ecclesiasticus, "and take care not to follow your own will; if you give up yourself to your desires, you will become a laughing-stock and a scorn to your enemies."(a) We cannot give the devils, our enemies, a greater subject of joy than to deliver up ourselves to our passions. For they treat us after so ill a manner, that all the devils in hell together cannot treat us worse. Wherefore, Ecclesiasticus earnestly begs of God that he would

(a) Ecclus. xviii. 30, 31.

hinder this chastisement from falling upon him. "Thou, O Lord, who art my Father and the God of my life, drive away from me all unchaste and impure thoughts; permit me not to be possessed by the desires of the flesh, and give me not over to a shameful and foolish mind."(a)

TWENTY-SECOND DAY.

"Self-will stands as a wall of brass between man and God. Wherefore he who renounces his own will, may say with the psalmist, 'Through my God, I shall go over the wall.'" (b)—*Holy Abbot Pamen.*

"Man's salvation and perfection consist in doing the will of God, which he must have in view in all things, and at every moment of his life: the more he accomplishes this divine will, the more perfect he will be. To do the will of God, a man must despise his own: the more he dies to himself, the more he will live to God."—*Blessed Peter Claver.*

Cassian relates, that John the Abbot, being upon his death-bed, which was surrounded by his disciples, as by children about the bed of their dying father; they earnestly begged of him to give them the comfort of some short document for their spiritual advancement, which he might leave behind him as a spiritual legacy, to help them with greater facility to ascend to the height of perfection. "I have never," said he, smiling, "done my own will, nor ever taught anything to another that I have not first practised myself."

The holy Mother Jane Frances never ceased to

(a) Ecclus. xxxiii. 4—6. (b) Psalm xvii. 30.

urge her daughters to mortify their own will, that they might fulfil with perfection the will of God. After recommending to them great exactness in the fulfilment of the rule, she once spoke to them as follows:—"It is good to observe the rule which says that we should go promptly at the first stroke of the bell; but it is better to observe most minutely that which orders the perfect self-denial of our own will."

Abbot Abraham, who had been a disciple of St. Agatha, having asked St. Pamen, "How it came to pass that the devils were always assaulting him?" "The devils," replied the saint, "don't oppose those who do their own will; for with respect to us our own wills are devils, because they are always tempting us to follow them. But it is against those who, like Moses and other saints, have got the better of their own wills, that the devils fight."

Nothing is more injurious to a Christian, and especially to a religious, than to be guided by the dictates of his own will. For, as the will of God is the fountain of every good, so self-will is the source of every evil. "Let self-will cease," writes St. Bernard, "and there will be no hell. Whoever follows his own will, follows a blind guide, and will sooner or later fall into the ditch." St. Anthony used to say that self-will is that wine which inebriates man so as to render him incapable of comprehending the value of virtue or the evil of vice. Cassian relates that the Abbot Achilles, being asked by his disciples with what army the devil fights against religious, replied that he fights against them especially by means of self-will, and that by these arms he often defeats them. Oh! how happy that religious, who, at the hour of death,

can say, with the Abbot John, I have never done my own will. St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi used to say that the only means of dying a happy death is to submit with simplicity to the direction of a superior. "To crucify all his desires, is," says Cassian, "the end of a religious." The religious, then, who does not attend to the mortification of self-will cannot be called a religious, but a sacrilegious violator of his own profession. What greater sacrilege can there be than to take back the will which has been once consecrated to God? "There is not," says St. Bernard, "a more heinous sacrilege, than to resume power over a will, once offered to the Almighty."

TWENTY-THIRD DAY.

"Watch over thyself, stir up thyself, admonish thyself; and whatever becometh of others, neglect not thyself. The greater violence thou offerest to thyself, the greater progress thou wilt make."—*Thomas à Kempis.*

"To mortify one passion, no matter how small, is a greater help in the spiritual life than many abstinences, fasts, and disciplines."—*St. Philip.*

THE holy Abbot Agatho used to say, "A man who does not restrain his passions, though he were even to raise the dead to life, cannot be pleasing to God." And the holy Abbot Pomen, "Evil cannot be cast out by evil; wherefore, if any doth evil to you, do good to him, that you may overcome his evil by your good." And

again, "He that is quarrelsome, or apt to mur' mur and complain, is no monk."

The following maxims are recorded in the life of St. Ignatius, as often repeated by a holy hermit, who had spent many years in the practice of virtue, and was held by all who knew him in great reputation of sanctity:—"What kills the soul with cold, is the not stripping from it the garment of self-love. The highest, and the most useful of all human knowledge, is to know how to deny one's own will. He who is not at peace with God, is always at war with himself. He who sets out to God, must first depart from himself. This world is a place of exchange and barter, and he only is rich who loses himself that he may gain God. The greater part of mankind take counsel from fools, for the world is folly, and the flesh is folly, and in listening to these counsellors they are the greatest fools. To die well, you must first be dead. To do a great action, you must know your own nothingness. If you would live in Christian joy, take heed that you remain ignorant of evil."

He used to thank God that he had no relation living in his native city of Bassano, because a man's greatest foes are they of his own house, and he would have found them disturbers of his peace, instead of imitators of his life. "God gives not Paradise," said he, "to those who think it costs much, but to those who willingly give their best, however large be the price." He used thus to explain those words of David:—"In circuitu impii ambulant."—"Men of the world begin their circle at self-love; they proceed through the love of creatures, and return again to the point from which they started. Saints, on the

can ontrary, begin with love to God, proceed through my ove for their neighbour, and return again to the to love of God."

Some persons are most careful to put on a mortified exterior, yet use but a very little care to mortify their interior. But what will this appearance of virtue avail them, if, under its cloak, they conceal a heart defiled by wicked passions?

"Of what use is it," says St. Jerome, "to reduce the body by abstinence, if the soul is swelled with pride?—or to abstain from wine, and to be inebriated with hatred?" It is useless to chastise the body by fasting, while pride inflates the heart. In vain do we abstain from wine, while the soul is intoxicated with anger against all who thwart our designs, or oppose our inclinations. No wonder, then, that St. Bernard deplored the miserable state of religious who wear the external garb of humility, and at the same time inwardly cherish their passions. "They," says the saint, "are not divested of their vices; they only cover them by the outward sign of penance."

TWENTY-FOURTH DAY.

"There is one thing which keeps many back from spiritual progress and fervent amendment of life: and that is, the apprehension of difficulty, or the labour which must be gone through in the conflict. And they, indeed, advance most of all others in virtue, who strive manfully to overcome those things which they find more troublesome or contrary to them. For then a man makes greater progress, and merits greater grace, when he overcomes himself more, and mortifies his spirit. He that is diligent and zealous, although he have more passions to fight against, will be able to make greater progress than another who has fewer but is withal less fervent in the pursuit of virtues. Two things particularly conduce to a great amendment: these are, forcibly to withdraw one's-self from that to which nature is viciously inclined; and, earnestly to labour for that good which one wants the most."—*Thomas à Kempis.*

"Let not those whose nature is impetuous and rebellious, despair of obtaining perfection, as if it was not for them. Let them take courage, and try to restrain themselves, and know that in God's sight one generous effort of theirs is of more value than many acts which others perform without labour, being assisted by their mildness of nature. Moreover, this fierceness of nature, when it is once subjected and inured to the sway of the spirit, is fitted to do great things in God's service, and it is not easily deterred by difficulties from undertaking such works, and carrying them through."—*St. Ignatius.*

He formed a similar opinion of two brothers, one of whom was exceedingly mild, rather from natural placidity than from virtue, whilst the other sometimes broke out into acts of impatience, but often restrained himself, and stifled the expressions which rose to his tongue. The saint gave this second the preference, and used often to say to him, "Courage, brother; conquer yourself, and you will be more rich in

merits than another whose tranquillity is more the lack of provocation than the effect of victory." Having found a brother who had gone alone into the garden during the time of general recreation, because he felt inclined to be angry, he said to him, "You are wrong in thinking thus; these enemies are to be overcome, not by flight, but by combat. Solitude does not take away impatience, but only hides it; and you will please God more highly, and gain greater merit for yourself by mortifying the asperity of nature, be it little or great, than you would by burying yourself alone in a cavern for a whole twelvemonth without speaking to any one."

St. Francis of Sales was naturally very prone to anger; but by continual violence to himself, he became a model of meekness and of sweetness. It is recorded in his life that he bore, without murmurs or complaint, the greatest injuries and calumnies; which, to try his patience, were, by the divine permission, heaped upon him. "A patient man, according to Solomon, is more to be esteemed than one that is valiant, and he who is master of his passions, than he who takes cities by assault." The reason that St. Ambrose gives for this truth is, that our own bad inclinations or domestic enemies are far more dangerous than external or foreign enemies. "St. Joseph also," says he, "gained more glory in commanding himself, and in resisting the solicitations of Potiphar's wife, than afterwards in commanding all Egypt." St. Chrysostom is of the same opinion, and says, that David gained a greater victory, when he could have revenged himself upon Saul by killing him in

(°) Prov. xvi. 32.

his tent, and did not; than he did in overcoming Goliah. The trophies of this first victory were not raised in the terrestrial, but the celestial Jerusalem. And for this he deserved, not only that the virgins should go before him singing his praises, as when he returned conqueror of Goliah, but that all the choirs of angels in heaven should rejoice and admire his virtue and courage, in his great victory over himself.

The difference that there is between spiritual persons who labour after perfection, and carnal and sensual persons who think not at all of it, does not consist in feeling or not feeling the motions and contradictions of the flesh, but in permitting or not permitting themselves to follow them. The fish that is alive swims against the stream, but a dead one is carried down with it; so to know whether the spirit of God be living or dead within us, we need only to see whether we go against the current of our passions, or whether we permit ourselves to be carried and driven along by their impetuosity. The whole matter, therefore, consists in not giving ear to temptations, and not consenting to them; so that, we must be so far from being discouraged, by reason of the bad inclinations we find in ourselves, that we must, on the contrary, take courage, and excite ourselves to gain a greater crown by overcoming them. This is what St. Austin counsels us, in his third sermon on the Ascension; where, having exhorted the faithful to ascend to heaven with Jesus Christ, he proposes their own passions as means or steps to help them. "Let us ascend after him," says he, "by the help of our vices and passions, and would you know how this can be done? It is by casting

them under foot, and making them, as it were, a ladder to climb up by. If we raise ourselves above our passions, they will raise us above ourselves, and become as so many steps to raise and elevate us even to heaven itself."

We read of St. Ignatius, that, being naturally ardent, he had so overcome and subdued his nature, by the help and assistance of grace, that people thought him to be of a phlegmatic temper. Plutarch relates almost the same thing of Socrates. He says, that an excellent physiognomist, having with attention considered him, could not refrain from telling him, that he was a man inclined to lewdness, debauchery, drunkenness, and many other vices; the disciples and friends of Socrates became very angry with this man, and were ready to treat him ill, had not Socrates hindered them, saying, "The man is in the right, for I should be such a one as he indicates, or describes me to be, were I not given to the study of philosophy, and to the practise of virtue." Now, if a philosopher, who had only the assistance of the light of nature, was able in such a manner to overcome his bad inclinations, what may not a Christian, or a Religious, be able to do, by the help of divine grace, which is a thousand times more strong and powerful than nature is?

Plutarch extolled Alexander the Great above all other kings; because, says he, others were born to great kingdoms, but Alexander conquered them by his sword and valour, and purchased them by the many wounds he received in battle. In like manner, such as have rendered themselves masters of their passions, by dint of the sword, if I may so say, moderating and mortifying them-

selves in all things, are far more worthy of praise than those who are born with sweet and peaceable tempers, and never have any provocation to fight.

TWENTY-FIFTH DAY.

"He who despises small things, shall fall by little and little." (a) —*The Wise Man.*

"It ought to be our principal object to conquer ourselves, and from day to day to go on increasing in spiritual strength and perfection. But, above all, it is necessary that we should study to overcome our little temptations to anger, suspicion, jealousy, envy, duplicity, vanity, foolish attachments, evil thoughts, and so on: for by so doing we shall gain strength, to resist more violent temptations."—*St. Francis of Sales.*

St. Austin relates, that a Catholic, being provoked to a passion by flies that continually tormented him, was visited by a Manichean, to whom he mentioned the inconvenience he received from them, and the emotions of impatience they caused in him. The Manichean thought he had found a fit occasion to instil his error, which was, that there were two origins or causes of things,—the one of invisible things, which was God; the other of visible things, which was the devil; and perceiving how excellent an occasion was offered him of persuading the Catholic to a belief of his error, he said, "Who do you believe was the creator of these flies?" The Catholic, who found himself so tormented by them, durst not say that it was God. "But if it

(a) Ecclus. xix. 1.

was not God," replied the Manichean, "who was it that made them?" The other replied that he thought it was the devil. The Manichean still pressed the argument more home: "But if the devil," says he, "made these flies, who made the bees?" By reason of the small difference he perceived between the one and the other, he answered, "that if God had not created the flies, probably He had also not created the bees." The Manichean, having gained this, by little and little, drew him on further, passing from the bee to the grasshopper, a little bigger than the bee; from the grasshopper to the lizard, from the lizard to the sheep, thence to an ox, then to an elephant, and, last of all, to man himself; "and hereby persuaded this poor man," says St. Austin, "that God had not created man." See into what an abyss of miseries he fell, because he could not patiently suffer a small inconvenience caused by flies.

The venerable Margaret Alacoque thus wrote to a nun who was negligent in combating her little passions:—"I recommended you at the holy communion, as I promised; but our Lord wishes me to say that He is not satisfied with you; that if you are not more attentive to moderate your little sallies and impetuosities, you will oblige Him to withdraw from your heart. Take care to do as He desires, otherwise you will become as wicked as you now wish to become good. If you will take my advice, you will make five attempts every day to correct yourself; you will mortify your hastiness three times, and your antipathies twice daily until the feast of Our Lady's Presentation, thus to dispose yourself to receive the favours Jesus deigns for you in your

retreat. I believe our Lord loves you singularly; for, if it were not so, He would have left you longer in your sins. Confide in His goodness, and be not troubled or cast down. When you have fallen voluntarily, do penance for it immediately."

St. John Chrysostom says, that as a bird which is tied by the smallest thread is hindered from soaring high, so a soul that does not aim purely at God alone, but allows her affection to rest upon any created thing, can never rise to the perfection of divine union.

There are some religious who feel scarcely any scruple to indulge in reciprocal jealousies, slight murmurings against their superiors, ridicule of their equals and inferiors, little sensualities, the love of vanity, and whatever nourishes it, curiosity regarding worldly things, little attachments, and similar other little faults; but alas! these things, when they are allowed to remain long in the soul, never fail to extinguish the fervour of devotion, and to expose it to the danger of losing entirely the grace of God. St. Dorotheus relates that, having the charge of spiritual things in the monastery where he lived, all the religious came to give him an account of their temptations; and, amongst the rest, one came to discover the temptation of gluttony, which very much tormented him. As one disorder commonly causes another, this temptation was so great as to make him steal, in order to get something to eat. The saint, having sweetly asked the cause of his dishonesty, he answered, it was because they did not give him enough at table to satisfy his hunger, which even devoured him. St. Dorotheus counseled him to go and make known his wants to the

abbot; but, perceiving that he had a great difficulty in doing so, and that he was ashamed to speak to his superior of it, he went to the abbot himself, and made known the necessity of this religious. The abbot left the whole matter to be managed by the saint as he should judge best; the saint, therefore, called the dispenser, who gives out meat and drink, and told him to give this religious whatsoever he should desire, and as often as he should ask for it. The dispenser obeyed, and the religious, having in abundance whatsoever he could desire, passed some days without stealing anything; but, returning little by little to his former bad habit, he went, all bathed in tears, to the saint, to discover his fault, and beg a penance for it. For he still had this quality, which was very good in him, that he made known his defects as soon as he had committed them, which is a very proper means soon to overcome them. St. Dorotheus asked him whether the dispenser had given him what he asked for, and whether he had ever refused him anything? The religious answered, No; but he was ashamed to go so often as his hunger urged him. And would you be ashamed or afraid, said the saint, to come to me, now you know I am not ignorant of your temptation? He answered, that he should not be at all ashamed. Whereupon, the saint ordered him to come to him when he wanted anything, and he would supply him; and urged him therefore to steal no more. St. Dorotheus at that time had care of the sick, and treated him very well, which hindered him for a while from stealing. But, after some time, he returned to his bad habit, and then, full of tears and confusion, he disco-

vered his fault, begging pardon, and desiring a penance for it. But how, dear brother, comes it to pass, said the saint, since you say you are not ashamed nor afraid of coming to me, and you receive from me what you desire, that you still persist in your ill custom of stealing? I neither can answer myself, nor give a reason why I steal; it is, without doubt, the bad habit I have formed that moves me to it; for I neither want anything, nor do I eat what I steal, I even give it to the horses. And, in effect, they went to his chamber, and there, under his bed, they found several eatables, which he had hidden, and left there till they were spoiled; and then, not knowing what to do with them, he carried them to the stables, and gave them to the horses. We may perceive by this, says St. Dorotheus, the deplorable condition to which a bad habit or passion leads us, and the obligation under which we are of combating it, however weak or trifling it may appear to be.

Oh! what treasures of virtue and merits are laid up, by stifling in their very birth, those little inordinate desires and affections, those bickerings, those suggestions of curiosity, those bursts of bad humour, and other similar effects of self-love. When you are contradicted, give up your opinion with cheerfulness, unless the glory of God require that you maintain it. When feelings of self-esteem spring up in your heart, make a sacrifice of them to Jesus Christ. If you receive a letter, restrain your curiosity, and abstain from opening it for some time. If you desire to read the termination of an interesting narrative, lay aside the book, and defer the reading of it to another time. When you feel inclined to mirth, to pluck a flower,

or to look at any object, suppress the inclination, for the love of Jesus Christ, and deprive yourself, for His sake, of the pleasure of indulging it. A thousand acts of this kind may be performed during the day.

It is narrated of St. Dositheus, that by similar mortifications of the interior, he arrived, in a short time, at a high degree of perfection. Though unable, in consequence of bodily infirmities, to fast, or to discharge the other duties of the community, he attained by this means to so perfect a union with God, that the other monks, struck with wonder at his sublime sanctity, asked him what exercises of virtue he performed? "The exercise," replied the saint, "to which I have principally attended, is, the mortification of all self-will."

TWENTY-SIXTH DAY.

"Lest cupidity should gain strength, strike it to the ground whilst it is weak."—*St. Augustine.*

"If a slight wound in the human body be neglected, by degrees it spreads into loathsome ulcers; and if the first germ of corruption be not cured, it becomes a gangrene, calculated to infect the whole frame. Nor does it happen otherwise in moral wounds. If the first movements of our unruly passions be not quenched, they spread, penetrate, and extend to the innermost recesses of the soul, and infect it with the grievous sores of sin."—*St. Ephrem.*

St. Dorotheus gives a very profitable instruction upon this subject. "When you are tormented by any passion or bad inclination," says he, "if you

be so weak as to yield to it, and to go whithersoever it would lead you, believe for a certain truth that it will take deeper root, and become stronger and stronger; and from that time forward it will wage a more violent war against you, and give you greater pain and difficulty. But, if at the first onset you courageously resist it, it will daily diminish, and it will every day have less strength to set upon you, till at length it will come to have no strength at all, and will not be able any more to disquiet you."

The venerable Joseph Anchieta used to say, that the devil wishes for nothing more than to catch us by one little hair of our head, because he can work so well upon that as to change it into a long and strong cord, wherewith to draw and bind our souls to himself. If once only he can induce us to follow our own will, though in a slight matter, he will then induce us to do the same in other and greater things, until we become indifferent to obedience, a virtue which consists in doing, not our own will, but the will of God, declared to us by means of our superiors. If by chance we are negligent in banishing one bad thought, though light in itself, the devil will so apply himself as to introduce a whole host of evil imaginations. If we once allow ourselves to grow cold in the exercise of prayer, or slacken ever so little the fervour of our communication with God, the fiend immediately, but insensibly, will send such a frost into our souls, that we shall not only feel no relish for holy meditation, but even prove false to all exercises of piety, nay, to religious life itself, until at length we return to our former liberty of heart, and seek for worldly intercourse and consolations.

Cast out the enemy, says St. Jerome, whilst he is still young, because, if he gain strength, he will overpower you. Eradicate the tares of passions as soon as they appear, and do not let their roots strike deep into your heart, for they will ruin you. If, says the Imitation of Christ, we would use but a little violence towards ourselves in the beginning, we might afterwards do all things with ease and joy. It is hard to leave off our old customs, and harder to go against our own will. But if thou dost not overcome things that are small and light, when wilt thou overcome greater difficulties? Resist thy inclinations in the beginning, and break off the evil habit, lest, perhaps, by little and little, the difficulty increase upon thee. Oh! if thou wert sensible how much peace thou wouldst procure to thyself, and joy to others, by behaving thyself well, thou wouldst be more solicitous for thy spiritual progress.

One of the ancient monks, as we learn from St. Dorotheus, has beautifully illustrated this doctrine. He commanded one of his disciples to pluck up a young cypress; the disciple executed the command without difficulty. The superior then told him to pull up another tree of greater growth; to perform this task, all the strength of the young monk was necessary. Lastly, the venerable father commanded the disciple to tear up a tree which had taken deep root. In obedience to this precept, the young religious exerted all his strength; but his efforts were fruitless, the tree was immoveable. Behold, said the old man, how easily our passions are eradicated in the beginning, and how difficult it is to conquer them after they have acquired strength and vigour by evil habits. This truth is confirmed by daily

experience. A religious, when he receives an insult, feels within a motion of resentment; if in the beginning he stifle the spark, and silently offers to God the sacrifice of his feelings, the fire is extinguished, he escapes unhurt, and even acquires merit before the Lord. But if he yield to the impulse of passion—if he pause to reflect on the insult he has received, and manifest externally the feelings of his soul, that spark of resentment will soon be kindled into a flame of hatred. Another religious entertains a certain little attachment towards a certain person: if, in the beginning, he avoid the company of that person, the affection will vanish; but if he encourage the attachment, it will in a short time become sinful, and deprive him of internal peace. We must therefore abstain, with the greatest care, from nourishing our passions—the monsters that would devour us.

TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY.

"A man must go through a long and great conflict in himself, before he can learn fully to overcome himself, and to draw his whole affection towards God."—*Thomas à Kempis.*

"Whensoever a man feeleth himself bent with any great vehemence and eagerness upon any undertaking, even though of itself holy and important, he should put it aside to another time, and not take it up again until his heart has entirely recovered its tranquillity, and a holy feeling of indifference; otherwise self-love will insinuate itself insensibly, and will defile the purity of his intention."—*St. Vincent of Paul.*

St. Francis of Sales, being one day disengaged from his other business, sent for St. Jane Frances to the parlour, and said to her:—"We have now a few hours to ourselves, which of us shall speak first?" The blessed mother, who was eager and more anxious about her soul than anything else, replied with quickness, "I shall, if such be your will; my heart has great want of being reviewed by you." The holy bishop, who was near the consummation of this life, not wishing to see any eagerness, though on spiritual subjects, in her whom he desired to be all perfect, replied in a gentle but serious tone of voice, "What! are you still eager? and have you a choice of your own? I hoped to have found you altogether angelic." Knowing, however, that the blessed mother was one of that class of perfect souls, of whom St. Bernard speaks, who have no need to be directed, God being their guide; he continued, "We shall speak of ourselves at Annecy; let us now finish the business of our congregation. Oh, how I do love our little institute, because God is so loved

in it!" The blessed mother, without replying a word, attempted to forget all that she had prepared to speak of, and only mentioned such matters as were connected with the institute. These two noble souls were four hours together conversing on different matters which they were to insert in the Book of Customs. The conversation being finished, the holy mother left Lyons with his benediction, hoping to see him again soon at Annecy, and went to the convent at Grenoble. While on her road, she grieved very much the blessed father had not permitted her to speak to him of herself, but, without reflecting, or even censuring, what her director had done, she resigned herself to the divine will, and taking up her Psalter, commenced chanting the twenty-sixth Psalm, "Dominus illuminatio mea;" repeating several times the verse, "Quoniam pater meus et mater mea dereliquerunt me Dominus autem assumpsit me." She thus regained her spirits, and this was her ordinary remedy in her interior trials, to abandon herself into the hands of God by repeating a few verses of holy writ.

St. Dorotheus says, that there is nothing which so much helps to our progress in virtue, and the acquiring of peace and tranquillity of mind, as to oppose and resist our own will, in such things as we are permitted to make use of. You are going somewhere, says he, and you have a great mind to turn about and look upon something in the way; overcome your curiosity, and do not look at it. You are in conversation, something occurs to your mind, that is much to the purpose, and it seems to you, that the saying it would make you pass for a clever person: let it alone—say nothing of it. By chance you cast your eyes upon some-

thing brought into the house that is new, and you wish to know who brought it—ask not who did so. You see a stranger enter the house; curiosity urges you to know who he is, whence he comes, whither he goes, and for what business—mortify yourself by making no inquiry after him.

This exercise, says he, helps very much to get a habit of mortifying our will; and if we accustom ourselves to renounce our own will in these small things, we shall the sooner be able to deprive ourselves of greater. As those who design to make themselves soldiers practise, in time of peace, military evolutions, which, though but mock-fights, yet qualify them for real combats; even so, a religious must endeavour to mortify himself, and renounce his will in small things that are permitted, and lawful for him to do, that he may be the more ready, and better disposed to mortify himself in those things which are forbidden. St. Bonaventure teaches the same practice of mortification in things which are indifferent; as in plucking or not plucking a flower, when one walks in a garden; for, says he, there is no harm in plucking it, yet it is very pleasing to God to refrain from it—thereby to mortify and overcome ourselves. Wherefore, he adds, that a servant of God ought often to say within himself, for the love of you, my God, I will deprive myself of the sight of this, of hearing that, of tasting this or that, or of taking this or that recreation. It is related of St. Francis Borgia, that while in the world, he loved hawking very much, and was wont to fly his hawks at the heron; but the moment the falcon darted on her prey, he looked on the ground, and took, as I may say, the lure from his

eyes, depriving them of that pleasure which, with a great deal of pains, they had all the day long sought after. St. Gregory says, that it is peculiar to the servants of God to deprive themselves of those things they may lawfully make use of, that they may be the further from making use of such as are unlawful. The ancient fathers, also, of the desert, brought up their disciples in this exercise, hindering them from doing little things they had a wish to do, in which there was no sin or imperfection; and making them do such as they had no mind to do, hereby to teach them to mortify themselves in all things, and to render them able to stand the proof even in the very hardest.

TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY.

"It is by resisting our passions, not by indulging them, that we shall obtain true peace."—*Kempis.*

"Whilst a single passion reigns in our hearts, though all the others should have been extirpated, the soul shall never enjoy tranquillity."—*St. Joseph Calassanctius.*

"It is by Thy decree, O Lord," says St. Austin, "that all irregularity of mind should carry its punishment along with it." This interior irregularity of the appetite in regard to reason, and of reason in regard to God, causes very great pain and uneasiness in man; and it is the same in all other things of the world. For what is there in nature which does not suffer very much whilst

it is in disquiet and disorder, and not in that state or situation for which the law of nature has ordained it? What pain does not a bone out of joint occasion? What violence do not natural bodies suffer when they are out of their element? Now, since it is so very natural to man to live according to reason, ought not nature to cry out against him, when, in opposition to reason, he follows any unruly passion? And ought not his own conscience continually to torment him, when he leads a life contrary to the dictates of reason? "*Who hath resisted Him,*" says Job, speaking of God, "*and hath had peace?*"[a] We must not deceive ourselves. It is a folly to hope to be in peace, unless we are careful to subdue our passions; and, therefore, St. John in the Apocalypse says, *that those who adored the beast, enjoyed no peace day or night.*[b] Your flesh, your sensuality is the beast; if you will be subject to it, you will never enjoy peace.

Physicians say, that health and a good disposition of the body consist in a due habit, and a just proportion of the humours; when this habit comes to be altered, the irregularity of the humours causes great pains and diseases; but when the humours are well tempered, they produce a marvellous health, and cause a cheerfulness and vigour in our bodies. The same happens in the health and good disposition of the soul. It consists in the regularity and moderation of our passions, which are so many humours belonging to it. When they are not tempered and mortified, they occasion spiritual diseases; but when they are well regulated, the soul enjoys a

[a] Job. ix. 4. [b] Apoc. xiv. 11.

perfect health, of which joy and peace are the inseparable companions. Passions in the heart of man are also compared to high winds at sea; for as the winds agitate and disturb the sea, and trouble its calm, by their tempestuous and violent gales, so our passions by their motions and irregular appetites, raise tempests in our hearts, and disturb our peace. Sometimes anger raises a storm; sometimes a blast of pride and vain-glory domineer and transport us farther than they should do; sometimes impatience, sometimes envy does the like; and, therefore, the prophet Isaias said very well, "*The wicked are like the raging sea, which cannot rest.*"(a) But as soon as these winds are appeased, presently a calm follows: "*He commanded the winds and the sea,*" says the Gospel, "*and a very great calm followed.*"(b) If you know, therefore, how to command the winds of your passions and appetites by mortifying them, and subjecting them to reason, you will enjoy a wonderful ease and tranquillity. But as long as you do not apply yourself in this manner to appease them, you will be subject to continual tempests.

The venerable Margaret Alacoque thus wrote to a tepid nun, who had recommended herself to her prayers. "I must tell you, dear sister, that in praying for you, the following idea has been communicated to me: the sacred heart wishing to establish its empire and the reign of its love in your heart, you destroy it to establish that of creatures. He will not, however, permit you to find true peace unless in the perfect deprivation of and detachment from these same creatures.

(a) Isa. lvii. 20. (b) Matt. viii. 26.

You will obtain this by avoiding them, and you will be victorious by combating them. Learn, then, so to resist and fight, for you will acquire nothing without trouble, and the prize is awarded to the conqueror alone. I entreat the sacred heart of Jesus to make you conqueror, for mine cherishes you fondly, though attached to the cross, where it is impossible to do anything but suffer; but its only desire is to love in suffering, and so suffer in loving. This is all my ambition."

St. Teresa confesses of herself, that her soul could never enjoy real peace until she undertook to combat courageously all her disorderly affections. Speaking of the time in which she used but a little care to subdue some slight inordinate inclinations, she writes thus: "In the meantime I passed a most miserable life, for in my prayer I came to know my faults; God called me on the one hand, and the world on the other; all the things of God gave me great pleasure, but the vanities of the world held me in chains; and it seems I had a desire to reconcile these two contraries, which are such enemies one to another, namely, a spiritual life and the pleasures and pastimes of the world. In prayer I endured great affliction, because my soul was not master, but a slave; and thus I was unable to retire within my heart (which was the method of proceeding I formerly used in prayer) without, at the same time, shutting up with me a thousand vanities. I can declare that this was one of the most painful kinds of life which can be imagined, for I neither enjoyed the sweetness of God, nor the pleasures of the world. When I was entertaining myself with the amusements of the world, the remembrance of what I owed to God gave me

pain; and when I was conversing with him in prayer, the affections I had for the world disturbed me; and this was a conflict so very painful, that I know not how it was possible for me to endure it for one month, much more for so many years."

In another place, addressing our blessed Lord, she writes thus: "O Lord of my soul! and my eternal good! how is it that when a soul is determined to love thee, and to do what she can to leave all things, that so she may employ herself the better on this love of Thee,—how is it Thou art not pleased that she should immediately rejoice in having attained this perfect love? But no; I ought to have said, it is of ourselves that we have reason to complain, because we do not desire it; all the fault is ours, in not immediately enjoying this love with perfection; true love of God brings with it every blessing. But we are so fond of ourselves, and so slow in giving ourselves entirely to God, that as His Majesty on the one hand will not allow us to enjoy a precious treasure without paying a great price for it, so on the other we must not omit disposing ourselves to receive it. I see clearly that there is nothing on this earth which can purchase so great a treasure; but if we did what we could to prevent ourselves from clinging to the things of this world, and if all our care and conversation were directed to heaven, I am confident that very speedily this blessing would be given to us, if we were quickly and entirely to dispose ourselves to receive it, as some saints have done. But the truth is, we think we give all to God, whereas we offer Him only the rent, or fruits, keeping in the meantime the roots, and possession of the

land ourselves. We resolve to be poor, and this is great merit; but often we employ all our care and diligence to see that we want nothing, not only of what is necessary, but what is even superfluous; and thus we expose ourselves to greater trouble, and perhaps greater danger, than we were in when we had possession of our own estates. It seems, also, that in becoming '*religious*,' or when we began to lead a spiritual life, and to follow perfection, we cared not for the honour of this world; and yet, as soon as ever our honour is in any way touched, we forget that we gave it all to God, and we wish to snatch it from the hands of God (as they say), and so run away with it, even after we have freely made him Lord of it, as we thought; and this is the case in all other things. This is an odd way of seeking the love of God, to desire to profess it entirely, and as it were in handfuls, and yet still to retain our old affections, and not endeavour to fulfil our good desires, nor wish to raise them from the earth, though we expect to enjoy many spiritual consolations at the same time. But these two extremes cannot well agree, nor is there, in my opinion, any relation between them; and, therefore, because we do not at once give ourselves up entirely to God, this treasure is not entirely given to us."

"If thou hadst a right spirit within thee," says the Imitation of Christ, "and wert purified from earthly affections, all things would turn to thy good and to thy profit. For this reason do many things displease thee, and often trouble thee, because thou art not as yet perfectly dead to thyself, nor separated from all earthly things. Nothing so defiles and entangles the heart of man as impure love to created things. If thou dost

reject exterior comfort, thou wilt be able to contemplate heavenly things, and frequently to feel excessive joy interiorly."

The pagan philosophers acknowledged this truth. They all agreed that wisdom consisted in a certain peace which the soul enjoyed when its sensual appetites were entirely repressed. Then it is that there remain no violent passions which, by their irregular motions, trouble the peace of the soul, and obscure the understanding, as is the case when the passions are in agitation. For the property of passion is to blind reason, and to diminish in us the liberty of free will, as we see every day in a man overcome by passion. It seems that passion even deprives him, in some degree, of his judgment, and renders him mad and furious. For, if you ask him afterwards, why did you say this? or why did you do such and such actions? he will answer you, because he was beside himself. But, when the passions are calm, the understanding has also more pure and clear light to know what is good, and the will a fuller liberty to embrace it. This peace and tranquillity is what God would always find in our hearts, that He may the better pour down his wisdom and other gifts upon us. The mortification of our passions and irregular appetites is the true means of obtaining this peace, and it was upon this account that the prophet Isaias said—*The work of justice shall be peace.*(a)

This is very well explained by St. Austin, writing upon these words of the royal prophet, *Justice and peace have kissed each other.*(b) Would you, says he, that justice and peace should

(a) Is. xxxii. 17. (b) Ps. lxxxiv. 11.

embrace each other? Perform the works of justice, and you will infallibly have peace. If you love not justice, you will never enjoy peace; for peace and justice are friends, linked together so closely, that if you love not justice, peace will not love you, and will never come near you. Peace is not obtained but by war; so that, if you will not make war with yourself, by mortifying and constraining your desires, and by getting the mastery over your passions, you will never obtain this peace, which is so necessary to be able to apply yourself to prayer.

TWENTY-NINTH DAY.

"The more a man mortifies his natural inclinations, the more he renders himself capable of receiving the divine inspirations, and of making progress in virtue."—*St. Francis of Sales.*

"What was the reason why some of the saints were so perfect and so contemplative? Because they made it their study wholly to mortify in themselves all earthly desires; and thus they were enabled, with the whole interior of their heart, to cleave to God, and freely to attend to themselves. We are too much taken up with our own passions; and too solicitous about transitory things. Seldom do we perfectly overcome so much as one vice, nor are we earnestly bent upon our daily progress; and, therefore, we remain cold and tepid. If we were perfectly dead to ourselves, and no ways entangled in our interior; then might we be able to relish things divine, and experience something of heavenly contemplation. The whole and greatest hinderance is, because we are not free from passions and lusts; nor do we strive to walk in the perfect way of the saints. And when we meet any small adversity, we are too quickly dejected, and turn away to seek after human consolations."—*Thomas à Kempis.*

St. Philip Neri knew well this truth, and hence he used every diligence, in order to mortify his

natural inclinations, and especially that of gaining the approbation and esteem of men. For this purpose, he used to keep in his room story-books, jest-books, and the like; and when persons went to him, especially if they were persons of distinction, he caused some of those books to be read, and pretended to be listening with the greatest attention and delight. On one occasion, Clement the Eighth sent to him some of the principal lords of the kingdom of Poland, to converse with him, and to admire his virtues and eminent sanctity. When Philip heard that they were arrived, before they had come up-stairs, he ordered one of his fathers to take one of these books, and begin to read, and not to give over on any account whatever until he should give him the signal to do so. As soon as the nobles entered, Philip most unceremoniously said to them, "Have the goodness to wait till this story is finished;" and, during the reading, he kept saying, "Ah! see now what good books I keep; see what important matters I have read to me;" and words of that sort, without so much as touching upon spiritual matters. The noblemen remained for some time, looking at one another in the face, and then took their leave, completely bewildered. As soon as they were gone, Philip told his father companion to put the book away, saying, "We have done all that was wanted at present."

The devil once put into the mind of a member of the congregation thoughts of disesteem of Philip, so that he lost faith in the counsels the saint gave him in confession. At last however, he manifested this temptation to the holy father out of confession, and Philip, on the look-out, as

usual, for every opportunity of mortifying both himself and others, commanded him to declare these thoughts publicly in the refectory. The penitent obeyed, and Philip stood listening to them with every mark of unusual joy.

Once, a priest of the congregation, a man of great charity and devotion, preached an excellent sermon in the church; whereupon Philip called him, and ordered him, under holy obedience, to deliver the same discourse six times running, and not willingly to alter a single word. Augustino obeyed, and then the people, when they saw him mounting the pulpit, cried out, "O, there is the father who has got only one sermon."

It is related of St. Arsenius, that when the water in which he was obliged to moisten and soften the leaves of palm trees, which he used in making baskets, began to corrupt, he would never change it, or throw it away; but if there were any need of fresh water, he would pour it upon that which was already corrupted, that so it might always continue to yield a disagreeable smell. A brother asked him one day, why he would not suffer that corrupt water to be thrown away, since it infected his whole cell with its stench? "Because," replied he, "I was used, when I lived in the world, to gratify myself with the most agreeable perfumes, and therefore it is more than just that I should now, during the time that remains of my life, in punishment of my former sensuality, support this stench, in hopes that at the last day God will deliver me from the insupportable stench of hell, and not condemn my soul with that of the rich man who had passed his days in feasting and delights."

Whilst the holy monk Theodore was climbing up the hill of Christian perfection, by a constant attention to please God, and omitted nothing which he conceived would promote his spiritual advancement, his mother, having heard where he was, attempted to bring him back again into the world. Wherefore, having obtained letters of recommendation from some bishops, to whom she knew St. Pachomius could refuse nothing, she went to the monastery of the nuns, and wrote from thence to the holy abbot, desiring that she might see her son. Pachomius called for Theodore, and told him how the case stood, and that to satisfy his mother's desire, and in consideration of the holy prelates whose letters she had brought, he thought he might go and see her. "And will you assure me, reverend father," said Theodore, "that after receiving such great lights and calls from God as I have received, and leaving both my mother and all things else in the world for the love of Christ, I shall have nothing to answer to our Lord at the last day, if I should go now and see my mother, to gratify flesh and blood, and give this disedification to my brethren?" "Nay," said Pachomius, "if you do not judge it expedient for your soul, I do not wish to compel you; for it is far more becoming a true monk, whose profession it is to renounce the world, and himself also, to shun all manner of unprofitable and worldly visits and vain conversation, and only to allow himself the company of those, from whose godly discourse he may be edified in the ways of God."

What is the reason, asks Father Rodriguez, that prayer, which is of itself replenished with so

much sweetness, and which, on the other hand, is so profitable and necessary for us, should oftentimes become so hard that we go to it with great reluctance and difficulty, and that but few give themselves to its exercise? The cause of this is the want of sufficient mortification. Prayer is not hard of itself, but mortification is; and, since mortification is a necessary disposition to prayer, we find prayer hard, because we have not this disposition. The same is easily perceived, even in natural things, for the difficulty does not consist in the introducing a form into any matter, but in disposing the matter to receive it. Consider, for example, what happens when we cast green wood on the fire. See how active the fire is in drying up its moisture or greenness—see the thick smoke that it sends forth, and the time it takes to dispose it to burn; but as soon as the wood has all the dispositions that are necessary, it presently takes fire, and is easily consumed. It is the same in the present case. All the difficulty consists in taking from our passions their strength and greenness, in mortifying our irregular appetites, and in entirely withdrawing ourselves from the things of the world. If we can but compass this, the rest will cost us nothing; our soul will of itself move towards God, and feel great pleasure and delight in conversing with him. Every one takes delight in conversing with one of his own humour and inclination. But he who applies himself to mortification does thereby spiritualize and render himself in some measure like unto God, and God reciprocally takes pleasure in communicating Himself to him. *My delight*, says He, by the wise man, *is to be, and to converse*

with, the children of men.[a] But when the heart is filled with all sorts of passions—when not quite free from vain glory, we have some slight attachments, pleasing ourselves in worldly conversation, loving our own ease and satisfaction—when we are in this disposition, as we are far from resembling God, so we find it hard to converse with him, and we take no pleasure but in earthly things, by reason of the likeness we have unto them. *They are become as abominable,* says the holy Prophet Osea, *as the things they love.*[b]

The Abbot Isaac, as Cassian relates, explained this by an excellent comparison. He said that our soul was like to a feather, that was so very light that the least wind raised it from the ground, and made it fly about in the air, when it was neither wet, nor besmeared with pitch, nor glued to anything which held it fast; but if it was wet, or if it was glued to anything that hindered it from rising, it was forced to remain upon the ground amongst dirt and filth. So, if our soul be pure, and free from all things, the least breath or whisper of the Holy Ghost, in time of meditation, will raise it even to God himself; but if it be tied to earthly things, if it be sullied by its irregular passions, it becomes so heavy that it cannot elevate itself to heavenly things, nor feel any satisfaction in prayer. Moses, says the Abbot Nilus, was forbidden to approach the burning bush till he had pulled off his shoes. And how can you think to approach towards God, or come to any conversation with him, till you have cast away your passions, and all ties to the things of the world?

(a) Prov. viii. 31. (b) Osea ix. 10.

We have an excellent example in the Prophet Elias, recorded in the fourth book of Kings, to show us how calm our passions ought to be when we wish to pray and to converse with God. The Holy Scripture recounts, that Joram, king of Israel, Josophat, king of Juda, and the king of Edom, marching together against the king of Moab, wanted water in the desert, so that their army was ready to perish. In this extremity, they consulted the Prophet Elias, and the king of Israel, who was an idolater, said to him, *Why has the Lord assembled these three kings here, to deliver them into the hands of Moab? What have I to do with thee?* replied the Prophet Elias; *go to the prophets of thy father and thy mother. As the God of Armies liveth, in whose presence I am, were it not for the respect I bear to Josophat, king of Juda, I would have no regard to thee at all, nor would have so much as come into thy presence. Notwithstanding, let there be a musician brought hither.*(a) Thus did the prophet, full of zeal and courage, reprehend the king of Israel, and reproach him for his idolatry. Yet, in fine, for the sake of Josophat, who was a holy and just king, he resolved to let them know the favours God designed to do them in their enterprise. But because the fervour of his zeal had a little moved and disturbed him, and that he might put himself into a right disposition to converse with God and receive his answer, they brought to him a musician, to calm and quiet his mind by the sweetness of music; and when he found it in calm and repose, he declared the wonders that God would work in their favour—sending them water in

(a) 4 Kings iii. 13—15.

abundance, and giving them the victory over their enemies. If it was necessary that a prophet, who was justly and piously moved, should appease this agitation of his mind, before he could speak to God, or receive any answer from him, how far more necessary is it for us to calm our irregular passions, when we would cause him to communicate himself to us in prayer?

THIRTIETH DAY.

"Be zealous for the better gifts." (a)—*The Apostle St. Paul.*

"Our spiritual advancement does not depend so much upon mortifying ourselves, considered in itself, as on the knowing how to mortify ourselves; that is, on the knowing how to choose the best sort of mortifications, namely, those that are most at variance with our own natural inclinations. Some will be inclined to disciplines and fastings, and although they be severe and painful penance, embrace them with fervour, and practise them cheerfully and easily, through that natural inclination they feel towards such practices and austerities. But, on the other hand, they are so much inclined to be delicate on the point of honour, and in the matter of reputation, that the least ridicule, unkind word, or want of attention, with which they may be treated, is sufficient to make them impatient, and to utter such complaints, as make them lose their peace of mind, and for the time the very use of their reason. These, then, are the mortifications that such persons ought to embrace with the greatest anxiety, if they desire to make progress."—*St. Francis of Sales.*

This saint gives us another beautiful rule for the practice of mortification in the most profitable manner. "The mortifications," says he, "that come to us, as it were, without our own seeking

(a) 1 Cor. xii. 31.

from God, or from men by His divine permission, are always more precious than those which are the offspring of our own will; and we ought to look upon it as a general rule, that the less there be in our actions of what is agreeable to ourselves, or of our own choice, so much the more is there in them of goodness, solidity, and devotion—of what is pleasing to God, and profitable to our own souls."

We read in the life of St. Francis Borgia, that departing one day very late from Valladolid, whilst it froze and snowed very hard, to go to Simanques, where the house of Novices was, he arrived so very late at night, that the novices were all gone to bed. He remained a long time knocking at the gate, the snow all the while falling in great flakes upon him; but every one being in his first sleep, and the gate being a good distance from that part of the house where they lodged, no one made answer. At length they heard him, and went to open the gate; and because he perceived the novices were extremely troubled for having made him wait so long at the gate, where he was all trembling and stiff with cold, he said to them, with a cheerful countenance, "Dear brothers, be not troubled, or in any pain at all. I assure you, God gave me a great deal of comfort whilst I was waiting. For I thought it was He that caused the snow to fall upon me, and made the wind to blow; that whatsoever He does, He performs with an infinite satisfaction, and consequently, that I ought to rejoice at the satisfaction He took in mortifying me, and make His pleasure become mine."

Another beautiful rule is proposed to us by the Venerable John Berckmans, and consists in

embracing and practising with great care those mortifications which are occasioned us by the particular duties of our own calling. "Of all mortifications," said he, "that which gives me the greatest pleasure, and to which I most willingly attach myself, is to discharge with strict fidelity all the duties of community life." One of the most striking characteristics of his virtue was, the absence of all singularity: he never stepped beyond the beaten path; the slightest duties, if prescribed to the community, were precious in his sight, not only because it was a favourite maxim with him to esteem little things, but chiefly, because, being common to others, and being regulated by superiors, he found therein less danger of gratifying self-love, and more certainty of practising the love of God.

When the practice of mortification seems too hard and painful to our weak and corrupt nature, let us take courage by considering our future reward. We read that the companions and scholars of one of the ancient Fathers, having observed his continual mortifications and rigid austerities, pressed him to be more moderate in his excessive penances. He answered them, saying: "My dearest children, were the condition of the blessed in heaven capable of grief, they would extremely regret not having suffered more in this world, since they now clearly see the reward they might have had, and how much they might have increased their happiness, and at how easy a rate." St. Bonaventure says, "that as much as we spend of idle time here, so much do we diminish our degree of glory hereafter, whilst, if we had employed our time well, we might have very much increased it."

This is confirmed by what is recorded of St. Mechtilda. Jesus Christ, whom this saint had chosen for her spouse, and to whom she entirely dedicated herself, frequently used to visit her, and give her a view of the glory of heaven. One day, she heard the happy souls cry out, and say: "O thrice happy you, who still live in the world, in whose power it is to augment your glory every moment!" Did man but know how much he might increase his merit every day, he would never wake without a cheerful heart replenished with joy, to think he is to begin another day, in which, living to God, he may be assisted by His divine grace every moment to advance His honour, and his own merit. This thought ought to be sufficient to encourage and strengthen us against all difficulties and mortifications, and make us suffer them with satisfaction.

The brother of St. Francis the Seraphic met him once in the middle of winter, and seeing him almost naked and shivering with cold, scornfully bid one ask him to sell him a drop of his sweat. The saint, putting on a pleasant countenance, answered, "Tell my brother, that I have sold it all to God, and that at a very dear rate." The same saint was at another time most grievously tormented with excess of pain, and with such troublesome temptations, that in all human appearance it was impossible for him to suffer them for any considerable time. Notwithstanding, a comfortable voice from heaven bid him rejoice, and told him that his sufferings would procure him a treasure in heaven, to which, the whole earth transformed into one solid mass of gold, the stones all turned into pearls and diamonds, and all the waters here below changed into most precious

balm, would not be comparable, nor could it ever reach the greatness and the value of that reward which was laid up for him there. This assurance so softened and mitigated his pains, that from that time forward he scarcely felt any, and being transported with spiritual joy, he called his religious, and acquainted them with the comfort Almighty God had bestowed upon him. Another thing which will greatly help us to practise mortification is to reflect often on our Lord crucified.

We read in the chronicles of the Franciscan order, that a person of great property, who had been brought up in all the ease and delicacies of the age, became a Franciscan. The devil, much concerned at this change, used all his power to divert him from his undertaking. He began his persecution by representing to him, every moment, the austerities of his order, in which, instead of a plentiful table, he found nothing but a few beans, very ill dressed; instead of a good suit of clothes, and lodgings richly furnished, nothing but a coarse habit, and a straw bed: in fine, he suggested to him, that instead of all those other conveniences the world afforded him, he met with nothing here but a very great want of all things. This picture was certainly a very gloomy one; but the devil made all things much worse than they were, and continually represented them before his eyes, still soliciting him to quit these hardships, and return to the world. The temptation prevailed so far as to make him resolve to leave his order. Being thus resolved, it happened that he passed through the chapter-house, where, kneeling down before a crucifix, and fervently recommending himself to God, he fell into an ecstasy. Christ and His blessed mother appeared to him, and asked him

the cause of his departure; he modestly replied, "that his nice and tender education in the world had made him very unfit, and even unable, to undergo the hardships of religion." At this our Saviour, lifting up His right arm, showed him the wound in His side bleeding fresh, and spoke thus to him: "Put here your hand: rub it all over with the blood that comes forth, and whenever those painful austerities that you are to suffer come into your mind, refresh and comfort yourself with this blood; and the most severe penances shall always seem sweet and easy to you." The novice, being come to himself, did all that our Saviour had commanded him, and whenever he was attacked by fastidiousness or impatience, he called to mind the passion of our Saviour, and all the bitterness of mortification turned into sweetness. How is it possible that man, formed out of dirt, and a mere worm of the earth, should look upon any suffering or mortification as too great, after he has seen his God crowned with thorns, and nailed to a cross for love of him? And who is there, that is not ready to suffer for, and expiate, his own sins, that has seen the God of Majesty, the Lord of heaven and earth, suffer so much for him?

THIRTY-FIRST DAY.

"Put off the old man who is corrupted, and put on a new man who, according to God, is created in justice and holiness of truth." (a)—*The Apostle St. Paul.*

"God demands an absolute death in His creatures, and without this nothing is done: whosoever enters into the service of God, does nothing else but put himself to death, by a thousand ways and means, every hour, and every moment. The life of our flesh is joy, pleasure, and sensuality. The death of the flesh is the privation of all its enjoyments and pleasures, and the subjugation of sensuality, by fasts, vigils, and other austerities. The life of the judgment and free-will is to dispose of itself and everything else in its own way: its death is always to submit it to the judgment and will of others by means of obedience. So also pride and the desire of reputation are put to death by continual acts of true humility and self-contempt, by concealing ourselves in order to be unknown. Whoever would truly serve God, must so put himself to death, and he deceives himself who thinks to do this with the milk and honey of internal and external sweetness in his mouth; for it cannot be without great pain, that we shall die to ourselves, that God may live in us." —*St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi.*

St. Paul, speaking of himself, said: *The world is crucified to me, and I to the world.* (b) He was not content to say, that he was dead to the world, but would add that he was crucified to it, and that the world was a cross to him, and he to it. It is the same as if he had said, pleasures, honours, riches, the esteem and praise of men, and all the world courts and adores, is a sensible cross to me, and an object of hatred and horror; on the contrary, I love and embrace, with the greatest tenderness of my heart, all that the world looks upon as infamy and disgrace. It is

(a) Ephes. iv. 22—24. (b) Gal. vi. 14.

then that a Christian is truly crucified to the world, and the world to him, when he perceives that the world is a cross to him, and he to it.

Cæsarius, in his dialogues, tells us, that there was a lay brother in one of the monasteries of the Cistercians, called Rodolphus, a great servant of God, and frequently favoured with divine revelations, who, staying one night in the church after matins, saw our blessed Saviour, and fifteen Cistercian monks about him, all hanging upon crosses. Our Saviour's body reflected so great a light, that by the help thereof he easily knew the monks, for they were all still living. On his being much surprised at this sight, our Saviour asked him if he knew those persons who were crucified with him? He answered, yes; but could not comprehend what the vision meant. *These*, says our Saviour, *whom you see are the only persons that are crucified with me, by a conformity of their lives to my death and passion.*

The venerable Margaret Alacoque once finding herself deprived of all interior sweetness, and in a state of great aridity, amorously complained of it to her beloved Spouse. Christ made her know that her uneasiness arose from seeking herself in the consolations she enjoyed; that He still saw in her too much curiosity, and that this curiosity put her in danger of going astray if she did not correct it. He told her, that for Him to fix His dwelling in a soul, He required an understanding without curiosity, a mind without self-judgment, a will without self-love, and a heart which aspires to no other movements than those of His holy love. He added, by way of reproach, "If I would have thee in My presence, deaf, blind, and dumb, oughtest thou not to be content?"

This venerable mother, in a letter to one of her daughters, writes thus :—"Keep your soul in a perfect disengagement from whatever is superfluous, dismissing from your heart all its vain inclinations and affections, not only to creatures, but even to those of your own performances which you believe to be well done. Everything of this nature takes the place of God in you, and prevents you from finding and possessing Him; for He will only enrich you with Himself and His gifts in the same proportion that you become free from self-love and attachment to creatures."

This holy occupation of endeavouring by all means to put off the old man, and put on the new man, according to God, is not confined within any limits of time, nor is it restricted to some particular class of persons; but it extends to all, and must last all our life. St. Bernard says, that in the exercise of mortification, we must always carry the hook in our hands; and that there is no person, how mortified soever, who stands not in need of pruning or retrenching something or other. Believe me, says he, that which is cut sprouts out anew; that which is cast away returns; that which is extinct takes fire again; and that which appears asleep awakes upon a sudden. It is not sufficient, therefore, adds the saint, to have pruned it once; we must cut it often, and even daily, if possible; for if we will not deceive ourselves, we shall always find something to cut and to retrench within ourselves. The hedges which we see in certain gardens furnish us with a very fit comparison for this subject. When these hedges are cut with much art and care, they exhibit a very beautiful appearance; but if the gardener be not very careful to

cut off the leaves and little branches, which shoot out every moment, in a very short time they will grow wild, and lose all their beauty. The same happens in spiritual things; though you seem to yourself so strong as to fear nothing, nevertheless, if you do not daily cut and retrench something by mortification, you will soon become like a monster without shape; because the root of the evil which is within us shoots forth new branches every moment, so that there is always something to be mortified. What progress soever you may have made in virtue, says St. Bernard, you deceive yourself if you believe you have entirely destroyed all your vicious inclinations; for you have only brought them under, and, whether you will or not, they will always remain with you. They are an enemy you may overcome, but you will never exterminate. It was for this reason that the ancient fathers continually tried those who were already advanced in perfection, by all sorts of mortifications and contempts; because, when their superiors, looking upon them already as men of consummate virtue, ceased to make any further trial of them, they who seemed to have entirely gained the virtue of mortification, lost, by little and little, the spirit of docility, together with the habits they had acquired during suffering. For, as the most fertile land becomes full of weeds, and produces nothing but thorns and thistles, if we neglect to cultivate it, so, a Christian, be he ever so perfect, if this perfection be not cultivated by a continual exercise of penance and mortification, will soon become like a wild and fruitless field, full of thorns and rushes—that is, full of many bad thoughts, and of a vain and dangerous confidence in himself. So that all persons stand in need of

mortification; not such persons only as have any bad and corrupt inclinations, but even those also who have very good ones; not only those who are still imperfect, and are newly entered into the way of virtue, but those also who have made great progress therein; and, lastly, not only those who have sinned, but those also who have preserved their baptismal innocence. Wherefore, generally speaking, all stand in need of mortification; some to acquire, others to preserve, virtue. How good and sure-footed soever a horse may be, it is always good to keep a stiff rein, and to let him now and then feel the spur.

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